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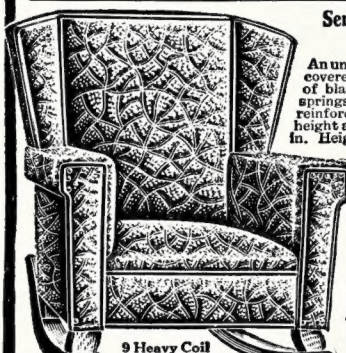

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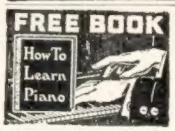

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Department of Finance, New York.

Frank C. Webner, C. P. A,
Specialist in Cost Accounting; former manager, J. Lee Nicholson & Co., Industrial Traffic Engineers, Chicago, New York and Milwaukee.

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XLIII. FEBRUARY 7, 1917. No. 4.

The Great Spanish Galleon

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Fight for the G. V. & P.," "The Taming of the Red Butte Western," Etc.

Treasure hunting in the Caribbean. The story of a man flung up on the beach of an uninhabited island, who stumbles on the wreck of an old Spanish galleon half buried in sand and water—a galleon that contains a fortune in Peruvian gold bars. Reaching home he calls to his aid in recovering the treasure a one-hundred-and-ninety-nine-and-a-half-pound friend who, in spite of his weight, was both adventurous and romantic. It looked like an easy road to riches, but they had competitors in the race for the treasure. A snappily written novel, with a flavor of comedy as well as stirring interest.

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CHAPTER I.

A LIGHTNING CHANGE.

THE cablegram from Havana came just as I was making ready to go on a camping vacation to Canada, and it certainly did upset things most beautifully. It was from a man named Cardrew, whom I had known slightly in my university days, and it read:

Grant Stirling fever in hospital here. Very low. Asks continually for you. Can you come?

I guess everybody has a scrap with pure selfishness now and again, and I'll confess honestly that this appeal stirred up all sorts of a fight between inclination on one side and a sort of duty owed to a man who had shared a room with me for four happy-go-lucky years in college, and was as much like a brother as such a time-tried friend could be, on the other. You see, the Canadian jaunt was all planned out: jolly party of some of the men I knew best, cool woods, piny smells, good fishing, and a capital prospect of being able to forget for a few weeks all about the troubles and brain worries of the plant where we made plows and sold them to the farmers of all the world.

On the other hand, it was hot; sizzling weather in the middle of a hot July; and, instead of being a thousand miles north of the plow-plant worries, in the invigorating North, Havana was a thousand miles south, under a weltering, tropical sun. I guess I did what anybody would have done in the circumstances—cussed around spitefully for an hour or so at the hard luck, and

then telephoned to the city ticket office for a berth on the "Royal Palm" and rushed uptown to the club to dump the contents of the Canada-packed grips on the floor, to make room for a jammed-in assortment of featherweight stuff—white duck, thin shirts, canvas shoes, and the like. And at six-ten, when the "Palm" squealed out over the switches at the Terminal, I was in lower four in the good ship—on wheels—*Apulia*—where under heaven do they get all the silly names for the Pullman cars?—fanning myself with my hat and edging around in the seat to get a whiff now and then from the buzzing electric air freshener over the corridor door. You see, my hair is, or used to be, red; and I regret to say that I tip the scales at one hundred and ninety-nine and a half. I am particular about that half pound. The fact that it is a half and not a whole pound is the only thing that saves me from having to join the Fat Men's Club.

Jacksonville the next morning, as a matter of course, and a tedious wait of five hours for the starting of the Key West train. The only break in the tedium came when the Florida East Coast train was making up. It was another cable from Cardrew, forwarded by way of the home-plant office, and it merely said:

Hurry, or you won't be in time.

Nice, comfortable thing to be flung at a man while he was still twenty-odd hours from Key West—to say nothing of the day which would be lost on the Straits ferry.

Lots of people sing the song of Florida, and I guess it's all right—in winter. But on that July day, with what breeze there was thickened into the consistency of pea soup by engine cinders, and Cardrew's second cablegram slowly reducing itself to a damp pulp in my inside pocket, the sand dunes and the beautiful Indian River flatnesses didn't appeal to me. Never mind; nobody cares how much a fat man perspires, and luckily I had no thin-as-a-rail berthmate to ask me if I didn't think the sea breeze was delightfully cool and all that. However, the longest day has its end, even on the Florida East Coast; and the next morning I awoke to the sound of tropical seas splashing against masonry of the concrete variety, and found a really cool breeze blowing across the dimpling waters of the great strait, with the train rushing along to its island destination over the arched causeway which has been built from key to key.

I fully expected Cardrew to meet me upon the arrival of the boat at Havana that afternoon, but there was only a boy from the Hotel Sevilla with a note. Cardrew, it appeared, was an engineer in charge of some sugar-plantation construction at the other end of the island, and his discovery of Stirling in the Havana hospital had been only by chance, and while he—Cardrew—was in the capital on a brief business errand. Now he had been obliged to go back to his job, and all he left me was the address of Stirling's hospital.

I went out at once, taking an auto cab because I couldn't speak Spanish enough to ask if there were any other conveyance. I had no trouble in getting at Stirling; I guess I do look a little like ready money, and the hospital people seemed glad enough to welcome anybody who knew the sick man. But I certainly had my shock when they took me to his room. In health, which was the only way I had ever known him, Grant was a perfectly fit figure of a football "forward," as handsome as an old Greek statue, and a man to make a sculptor's mouth water if he happened to be looking for a model. But now I could scarcely persuade myself that the gaunt, haggard skeleton, bearded, hollow-eyed, and yellowed, lying on the hospital cot, was all that was left of my old-time roommate.

He was in a dozing stupor when I found him, and the attendant, who spoke a little English, told me in whispers what I needed to know. Stirling had been brought in by a tramp steamer, from just where, the attendant didn't know. He was already delirious with the fever, which was now in its fifth week. It was typhus, so the attendant

said, explaining that it was not the epidemic form, but one common to the islands; also he said there was no danger of infection.

I had taken the precaution of getting a bite of something to eat before I left the boat, so I was foot-loose for the night. When you are in for the penny it is just as well to go in for the pound, so I took off my coat, found a palm-leaf fan, and told the attendant to go and take a rest, assuring him that I'd call him if he were wanted. Then I sat down to wait with what patience I could summon for whatever might be going to happen.

It was well along toward midnight before the poor shadow on the cot opened its hot-lidded eyes and stared at me. Oddly enough, as I thought, the recognition was instant. "Turley, old man!" said a weak voice. And then: "I knew you'd come if they could only get word to you. Good old Fatty!"

Believe me, it sure did me good to know that there was still enough of him alive to remember and use the old college nickname. There wasn't any delirium about that, at least. I drew my chair nearer and tried to say a few cheer-up things, but it was pretty hard, looking at that ghastly, ragged-bearded mask on the pillow.

"I couldn't make Cardrew understand; they all think I'm crazy," he panted, after a bit. Then: "I'm not kicking about Cardrew, you know; he was mighty good. But he simply wouldn't listen when I tried to tell him. Once, when he thought I wasn't looking, I saw him shake his head and tap his forehead at Miguel, the attendant. Then I knew it was no use; that he would just go on calling me crazy, no matter what I might say."

"You can tell me," I put in. "I'm as safe as a house. But perhaps it isn't good for you to talk too much."

"If I can talk to somebody who will believe me, and so get the thing off my mind, maybe I can rest up and pull through. I can't die now, Anson—I've got too much to live for."

"Take your time and go as far as you like," I said, and then I settled back to listen to what seemed to me as it progressed—as it doubtless had to Cardrew—to be the craziest fairy tale that was ever invented.

CHAPTER II.

RAINBOW GOLD.

"You knew, didn't you, that I've been over in Honduras, building a piece of railroad?" Stirling queried, as a beginning; and when I nodded, he went on: "The job was done, and I was coming out. There was no steamer due, and I took passage on a native trading schooner, the *Santa Maria*, for Puerto Barrios. You wouldn't call that particularly crazy, would you?"

"Not for a knockabout like you," I told him.

"Cardrew said it was; that I'd just dreamed it, because no man in his senses would ever take a native schooner for anywhere in this part of the world. Never mind; the *Santa Maria* was a fact, and a hideously unseaworthy fact, at that. We were caught in a hurricane, a regular Caribbean tail twister, and blown offshore. Inside of the first hour, the mestizo skipper had lost his bearings hopelessly, but by that time we were all too busy trying to keep the old tub afloat to care very much about anything else. Believable so far?"

"Sure," I assented.

Then he went on with a description of the storm, and I wish I could put it down in his own words. It was spectacularly lurid; black skies, the roaring of the wind, the seas mountain high. Their deck water casks, boats, everything not nailed down were carried overboard, and they couldn't get to the galley for food. By and by they lost both masts, and after that, for a day and a night, they were flung from the top of one sea to the bottom of the next, expecting every plunge of the schooner would be the last. Somewhere along in the small hours of the night the end came, though not exactly in the way they were anticipating. Stirling said he remembered only a frightful crash, and after that he knew nothing until he found himself on a beach; the

beach of a small island ringed in with a jagged coral reef. It was morning, and the sun was shining. And a few bits of wreckage tossed up on the sands were the sole remains of the *Santa Maria.*

"You are all right, so far," I. encouraged. "Cardrew was an ass not to believe such an ordinary story of a Caribbean shipwreck."

"Wait!" he beckoned. "For a while I couldn't believe that I was the only survivor from the schooner. It seemed too ghastly to be true. But it was true. The island was uninhabited. After I had eaten a breakfast of shellfish, I tramped the circle of the beach. I didn't find anything or prove anything except the one horrible fact—I was alone. Yes, there was one other fact: there were no springs on the island; the only fresh water was in a little pond or pool about as big as a washtub—rain leavings from the hurricane."

Here the poor fellow started in on a detailed recounting of his miseries, telling how the raw mussels or oysters or whatever they were nauseated him, how the strange fruits made him sick, and how he hoarded the scanty supply of rain water, sheltering it from the sun with branches broken from the palms and watching it shrink day by day in spite of all he could do. I saw at once that this wasn't doing him any good; his voice as he talked sank to a shuddering whisper. So I cut it short.

"We'll take all the torments for granted," I threw in. "Skip a few pages and tell me how you got away."

"Wait!" he said again. "Let me get at it in my own way. Telling it to you helps me to believe that it was all so; that I wasn't off my head—as Cardrew says I was. I think it was on the fifth day, when I was making a round of the island to keep up the endless lookout for a ship, that I found the wreck. It was on the south side of the island, where there was a gap in the reef. I don't know why I hadn't discovered it before. The water in the lagoon between the island and the reef was perfectly clear, and it wasn't very deep. I guess I just hadn't happened to look in the right place."

"A sunken wreck?" I asked.

He tried to nod his head on the pillow.

"Sunk and partly buried in the sand. I couldn't make it out very well at first; you know how the water distorts things. But by getting different angles, I saw it was the hulk of a ship that wasn't like any ship that sails the seas nowadays. There was the framework of a high sort of cabin at either end; sort of castlelike thing, and then I knew that it must date away back to one of the other centuries."

"You're talking too much," I told him, marking the growing fever light in his hollow eyes; but he flung out a skeleton hand in eager protest.

"No; let me go on and get it out of my system. You're still believing me, aren't you?"

"I'd believe you if you said black was white. But take it easy; we've got all the time there is, and then some."

"I didn't bother with the wreck that day. It was evidently so old that there couldn't possibly be any salvage from it that could do me any good. But the next day, when I was making my round, I stripped and swam out to it. By putting my face under water I could see it better. It was old, old; there was no question about that. The timbers were worn away to shells by the action of the waves; timber won't rot if it is wholly submerged, you know. After a bit I took a long breath and dived down to it. I don't know what I expected to find; certainly nothing that could be useful to me. It was a reckless thing to do. I was hardly down among the skeleton timbers when a big shadow came between me and the sunlight, and I looked up. My shadow was a shark; and—and, Anson, I had nothing but my bare hands; not even a pocketknife!"

"Go ahead," I said calmly. "I'll believe anything you tell me. The Good Book says that David or Samson or some other old Hebrew took hold of a lion by the jaws and pulled his head

apart. I'm sure you didn't do anything worse than that to the shark."

"You may laugh if you want to, but I thought I was a dead man. Just because there wasn't anything else to do, I clawed my way into the network of wrecked timbers on the old ship's after deck, chiefly, I guess, because I thought I'd rather drown than be eaten alive. The big beast tried to get below me so that he could turn over for the snap, but the timbers bothered him. Of course, I was in hideous distress for breath by this time; it seemed as if my lungs would burst. Still, I had sense enough to try to keep down. You know how it is under water—you have to work to keep from bobbing to the surface—and I was horribly afraid of getting tangled in the timbers overhead. Between us, the shark and I had stirred up the sand, so that I could no longer see anything, but in grabbing for handholds I cut my hand on something that felt like a mess of scrap iron. You can see the scar right there." And he held out a thin hand with the red line of a recently healed wound running across the palm.

"Scrap iron on a sixteenth-century wreck?" I queried.

"Of course not," he retorted, in feeble derision. "I'm coming to that. Whatever it was, it was anchored solidly, and by its help I dragged myself out of the timbers on the side farthest away from the shark and popped to the surface. Half a minute later, I was crawling out on the sands of the beach, sick and shaken until I didn't have strength enough left to get into my clothes."

"Naturally," I said. "And afterward?"

"After I got my nerve back, and had tied up the cut hand in what there was left of my handkerchief, I had something to think about—something to break the terrible monotony. The cut gave me my first clew. I knew the metal couldn't be iron. In all the fierce hurry of the grab I had noticed that the form of the skeleton scrapwork was regular—in squares. In another minute I had reasoned it out. The thing I had got hold of was the remains of a brass-bound chest. You can put the rest of it together for yourself, as I did. The wreck with the high bow and stern structures must date back at least a couple of centuries, and possibly three. What stuff, heavy enough to anchor itself, did such ships carry in brass-bound chests? The query answered itself: My wreck was one of the old Spanish plate galleons."

If I had had a thermometer handy, I should have been tempted to take Stirling's temperature. There isn't much romance in the making of steel plows, and I was beginning to understand why Cardrew had comfortably fallen back upon the excuse of fever delirium to account for the sick man's fairy tale. I thought to myself, though I didn't say it out loud, that I'd give a dollar or so to know just what wild and woolly romance Stirling had been reading just before he took passage in the *Santa Maria*.

"'And my name was Captain Kidd, as I sailed, as I sailed,'" I chanted, laughing, and meaning to chirk him up a bit; but he took it hard.

"No, you mustn't go off the way Cardrew did!" he fretted. "If you do, I shall go as mad as you think I am now. I want help, Anson; if I hadn't, I wouldn't have sent for you."

"Everything goes," I told him. "We'll call it a plate ship, if you like; we'll go even farther and assume that the rotten old brass-bound chest was full of Peruvian gold bars, if that'll make you any easier in your mind."

Stirling raised himself upon one elbow, and his eyes were blazing.

"That's it!" he jerked out. "You've gone across lots to it, though it took me a day and a night to figure it out. And the find was mine; by all the laws of finders and keepers, it was mine, wasn't it?"

"Of course it was yours, if you could fish it up and recover it," I hastened to say; and then, more to quiet him down than for any other reason: "Take your own time and tell me all about it. What did you do?"

"I had to find out for sure," he mut-

tered, lying back upon the pillows. "For two whole days the fear of the sharks held me off; and then I took the chance and swam out again, and dived, and groped around in the mess of scrap stuff. The gold bars are there, Anson; I don't know how many of them, because they were so heavy that I couldn't handle them, even under water. But there was no mistaking the feel of the metal. It was as smooth and clean as if it had just been cast in the molds. Nothing but gold would stay in that condition in salt water through all the centuries."

"Did you try to get it out?" I asked.

"I did; I worked the better part of a day trying to get one of the bars ashore, but I couldn't make it. I was weak and miserable from the wretched diet of shellfish and green fruit. Still credible, isn't it?"

"Sure," I assented; "so credible that I'm impatient to hear the next chapter."

"That chapter began on the morning after I had tried to get the heavy gold bar ashore and had dropped it a few feet astern of the wreck. I roused up at daybreak to find a trim white steam yacht lying at anchor in the lagoon, and the popping exhausts of a motor launch coming ashore was what had stirred me awake. About five minutes after that, I was trying to tell my story to the launch steerer, who plainly didn't understand a word of English."

It was evident by all the signs that the sick man had talked himself to the point of exhaustion. His final words had trailed off to a whisper, and his eyes were closed.

"That will do for this time," I said authoritatively. "You must stop and take a little rest. You've got yourself safe in the hands of the yacht people now, you know, and you can afford to sleep an hour or so on the strength of that."

The tired eyes opened heavily. "You're not going away, are you, Anson?"

"Not on your life! I'm going to sit right here by the window and smoke a good old Havana cigar that was made in Chattanooga, Tennessee, U. S. A., the same as the world-famous Turley Steel Plows. You shut your eyes and go to sleep."

"And you're still believing what I have told you so far?" he put in, so earnestly that it was almost heart-breaking to hear him.

"Sure! Don't you know that a fat man is the easiest mark on earth? Why, I even believe what the weather reports tell me."

He dropped off quietly at that, and I placed my chair by the window to carry out that threat about the cigar. Of course, I didn't tell him so, but I was still struggling with a plain business man's reluctance to accept the fairy tale. It wasn't like anything that had ever occurred in the process of plow making and selling, and I couldn't help thinking that it would have been a good bit more convincing if, right at the climaxing crisis, Stirling had been able to reach under his pillow and drag out one of the fabulous gold bars to clinch things. But he wasn't.

CHAPTER III.

SENOR SPARDOZA.

Stirling slept for a full hour, I should say, and when he awoke and beckoned to me he took up the story much as if the lapse of time had been only a minute or two:

"The yacht was the *Estrella,* of Cardenas, and its owner was a sugar planter by the name of Spardoza, an old Spaniard of the kind you read about, with white hair and heavy black eyebrows and mustache, and eyes of the sort that bore into you like augers. As near as I could make out, he was taking a little summer spin in his yacht with his family and a few friends.

"Spardoza spoke no English; for that matter, there were only two people in the party who did—two young women, who, as I understood it, were wards of Spardoza's, the daughters of an American mother and a Cuban father. The yacht people took me in and did for me hospitably, feeding me up and giving me some clean clothes. Estrella, the younger of the two girls

and the name maiden of the yacht, I suppose, was the most gloriously beautiful thing you ever saw, Anson, and she acted as my interpreter and was so good to me that it made my head swim. You know how such a thing as that would hit a man who had been through what I had."

"Perfectly." I grinned. "You fell in love with the beautiful Estrella right off the bat, of course."

Again Stirling raised himself upon an elbow. "I did that very thing, Anson; and, as to what happened afterward, I shall die believing that she had no hand in it. As I said, they fed me and clothed me, and then, just because the strain was off, I guess, I began to go off my chump. The reaction was too much for me. I don't remember much about that day except that I sat around under the awning on the yacht's after deck and talked to the two girls and through them to Spardoza. At first I couldn't make out why the *Estrella* had anchored in my lagoon, but after a bit I was told that there was something the matter with the engines or boilers, and I could hear the mechanics hammering down in the hold.

"Along in the afternoon, I knew I was in for a touch of fever. Up to this time I hadn't said a word about the plate-ship wreck, and I didn't mean to say anything. But I must have let the secret out in some way. I realized afterward that I had been saying a good many things that I couldn't remember two minutes after they were said. All at once I noticed a sort of frozen calm settling down upon Spardoza and his friends, and a little later they all faded away, one by one, leaving me alone with the two young women and an old Spanish beldame who was their duenna, as I took it.

"Things got pretty hazy for me after that. One of the first effects of these tropical fevers is to make you talkative, and, following that, a sort of stupor comes on. I seem dimly to remember that the motor launch left the yacht with three or four men aboard and ran up the lagoon toward the place where my wreck was hidden. Just past that I was made to understand that Marilla, the older of the sisters, was telling me that I had better go to a stateroom and lie down, and I guess maybe I did it, with the little black Cuban steward helping me to find the way. That was the end of it for me."

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Just what I say. When I came to myself, I was lying upon the beach of my island in my old clothes. The sun was rising white-hot out of the sea; the yacht was gone; and the whole thing might have been a frantic dream. But it wasn't a dream, Anson. It all happened, just as I've been telling you; I've got to believe it happened; if I don't, I shall go stark, staring mad!"

Candidly, I didn't think it was anything but a dream. It was too romantic to be anything else, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, but there didn't seem to be any use in arguing with him. On the contrary, I pretended to fall in with his notion.

"Of course you have some theory?" I suggested. "What made the old sugar planter put you ashore and abandon you in that merciless fashion?"

"I know, and you know," he broke out fiercely. "I had given away the secret of the plate ship—the old galleon with its king's ransom of gold. I was a sick man, and the probabilities were that I would die, anyway, and he could easily make the others believe that I had some contagious disease and it wouldn't be safe to take me in the yacht. With me out of the way, the treasure would be his, and if you could see his face you would say that he is just the cold-blooded old villain to do such a heartless thing."

I saw it wouldn't do to let him dwell upon this phase of it too long, so I tried to switch him. "What happened to you after that?" I asked.

"Sick as I was, I staggered up the beach, tore off my clothes, and swam out to the wreck. A shark would have found me an easy mark, but luckily there was no shark that morning. I took a breath that seemed to burst every blood vessel in me, and went groping down into the wreck. My

eyes were so hot that I couldn't see anything, but I pawed over the remains of the old sea chest and found that nothing had been disturbed. The answer was simple. Spardoza hadn't happened to have anybody aboard whom he could trust to do the diving stunt—perhaps nobody able to do it—and he had gone away to get a diver and the proper appliances. And if I shouldn't happen to be dead when he came back, he'd probably see to it that I died pretty soon afterward.

"I don't remember much of what followed, or how many days elapsed before I saw, one evening, just at sunset, the smoke of a steamer. I don't know to this good day what I did to attract the attention of the lookout, but I must have done something, because they sent a boat ashore and took me off. I had just one lucid minute while they were putting me to bed in a stateroom off the captain's cabin, and in that minute I asked the captain of the tramp, a hard-bitten old Norwegian sea dog, to take the bearings of the island and keep them for me. That was the last I knew until I woke up one day and found myself here in the hospital."

"And the bearings of the island?" I asked.

He rocked his head on the pillow. "I don't know. If Captain Svenson took them for me and wrote them down, the paper's been lost. I've searched every pocket of the clothes I had on when they brought me here, and it's gone."

At this I summed things up for him, fibbing a little for a sick man's comfort:

"You've brought it up to date now and got it off your chest; and I'm swallowing the whole thing without making any incredulous faces over it. When it comes down to a matter of sheer friendship, Grant, I'm the best little believer in the lot. While you need me, I'll come here every day and swear that the moon is made of green cheese, if you want me to. In the meantime, you've got to have some little pity on a fat man and hurry up and get well. I have a hunch that this climate isn't going to prove up on its claims to being the Western Hemisphere paradise to a man of my weight."

I thought that would settle him for the time being, at least, but it didn't.

"Wait!" he gasped. "I didn't get you down here to take the nurse's place. I wanted a friend who could believe in me and do things."

"Still hankering after those gold bars?" I laughed.

"I am!" he gritted. "They are mine. I went to hell and back again for the sake of finding out what was in that old wreck!"

"If you can find and marry your rich little half Cuban, you won't need the Peruvian stuff," I threw in, joking him.

"That's just why I will need it," he insisted. "The sisters are poor, both of them. I soaked up that much out of the part of the talk I can remember. They are wards of Spardoza's, and are dependent upon him."

"Well?" said I.

"I want you to do things for me," he reiterated. "I've been here five weeks, they tell me, and the Lord knows that's long enough to have put everything to the bad. But if it hasn't gone to the bad, I want to know it. For God's sake, Anson, take hold and find out for me. You've got the cold business sense that Cardrew and all the rest of them seem to lack. If you'll promise me, I think I shall be able to go to sleep and sleep the clock around."

I was finding the Cuban night steaming warm, though they all tell you that the Havana nights are cool, and I certainly did hate to promise anything on the strength of what was growing more and more like a pipe dream the longer I thought of it. But I had already said too much to boggle at such a little thing as a promise to a sick man.

"You hurry up and get well, and I'll run all the little errands for you," I said, and with that I pushed the bell button for the nurse and left the hospital to try to find my way back to the Hotel Sevilla.

CHAPTER IV.

A DREAM COME TRUE.

Having been up more than half the night with Stirling, I slept late the next morning. My room was on the top floor of the Sevilla, and it was cooler than I supposed anything ever got in that latitude. After breakfast, which was chiefly coffee and a crusty loaf of bread, my notion was to go back to the hospital to sit in with the sick man. But after I had smoked a cigar, it occurred to me that perhaps I'd first better find, or manufacture, some sort of information about the pipe dream to carry back to him.

In the cool light of the morning after, Stirling's story seemed even more fairylike than it had while he was telling it. I could take in the shipwreck part of it, all right, and the sufferings on the desert island. It was credible, too, that he had found some sort of a sunken wreck in his lagoon and had persuaded himself that it was the remains of one of the old Spanish galleons dating back to King Philip and the sixteenth-century robberies of the Peruvian Incas. Lonesomeness, the miseries, a bad diet, and a touch of fever would easily account for things thus far.

But the yacht incident might very well be the figment of a disordered brain. The way Stirling had told it, it took shape pretty accurately as a dream. He had gone to sleep lying on the beach, and, after all these things had happened, or seemed to happen, he woke up to find himself still lying on the beach. Perhaps some of the old-time buccaneers might have been capable of doing such a cold-blooded thing as this he had charged up to the mythical Spardoza, but common sense was trying to tell me—in the light of this fresh morning—that such things don't happen nowadays.

Just the same, in order to keep Stirling alive, it was absolutely necessary for me to go back to him with a story of some sort of an investigation at least begun. At first I thought I would try to invent something, but a few stabs at this showed me that I was too fat-witted. True, the Turley Plow, known on five continents, was my own invention, but that is different.

Business experience has taught me that when you haven't an idea of your own, the proper thing to do is to go out and try to soak up one from somebody else. We had sold some plows in Cuba, and our financial correspondent in Havana was a pleasant German gentleman who spoke all the known languages and a few others, and whom I had once had the pleasure of entertaining at the home club in the States.

Fifteen minutes later, I was closeted with my courteous correspondent at the Banco de Republica and was getting a welcome entirely out of proportion to the amount of business I had ever been able to give him. For a time the talk rambled around in the industrial field, and if I let Herr von Bethberg absorb the inference that I was fishing for the sale of more plows, it was merely on the score of prudence, though I could see that he was swimming in a deep sea of curiosity, trying to account reasonably for the appearance of a man of my avoirdupois in the tropics in midsummer.

Just to be able to tell Stirling that I had at least made inquiries, I mentioned the name of Spardoza. To my utter astonishment, Von Bethberg flung in a quick question.

"Do you know the Señor Spardoza, Mr. Turley?" he inquired.

"I have heard of him," I said. "He is a sugar planter down Cardenas way, isn't he?"

"East of Cardenas."

"A Spaniard or a Cuban?"

"A Spaniard, dyed in the wool, as the English say. A hard man. Have you to him been selling the plows?"

I said that I had not; that a friend had asked me, in passing, to find out all I could about the gentleman while I was in Cuba.

The genial little banker made a gesture which was part French and all German.

"Spardoza is at present in Havana. You shall meet him if it pleases you.

It will give me much pleasure to bring you with him."

I hastened to say that I had no special desire to meet the sugar planter; that a little personal information was all I craved. Was Spardoza the owner of a private yacht?

The answer was a prompt affirmative. There was a yacht, and it was at present lying in Havana harbor. A month or so earlier, the owner, with a party of friends, had returned from an extended pleasure voyage to the Isthmus. Getting down to the more intimate details, I was told that Spardoza had never married, and that his family consisted of two young women who were the daughters of a far-away cousin, their father having been a Cuban and their mother an American.

This was all sufficiently astounding, and it proved conclusively that the yacht-visit part of Stirling's pipe dream, at least, was a reality. I prodded a little deeper into the personalities. Were the young women legally members of Spardoza's family? The banker said they were; that they were the sugar planter's wards. Then he gave me a bit of gossip. Their father had left them well provided for, with Spardoza as his sole executor. There were rumors that the young women's patrimony had been shamefully dissipated. Spardoza was known to all Havana as an inveterate gambler in big things; in American slang, he was a "high roller," as the expensive yacht, a fleet of motor cars, a city mansion, and three or four country houses in different places on the island went to prove. But everything was mortgaged to the hilt, Von Bethberg intimated.

"I suppose you couldn't tell me just what form of amusement the señor is indulging in at the present moment, could you?" I asked.

Again there was the polyglot gesture, half shrug and half hand wave.

"Spardoza is what we should call a man of the mysteries, Mr. Turley. He comes and goes on the impulse of the moment, and I am told that his yacht is always kept ready to put to sea. There was lately a whispered story that his latest venture was a building contract of some kind on one of the islands. I don't know if that is true, but I do know that he has been hiring divers and buying machinery."

This looked as if some more of the pipe dream were going to turn into a reality, and I felt that I should have to get out into the good old sunlight before I could shake myself free from the impossible romance of it all. Nevertheless, I delayed the sun bath long enough to enlist the good offices of my friend.

"For reasons which I am not able to explain just now, I am anxious to keep a line of information upon Señor Spardoza pretty well up to the minute," I said. "Could you, without compromising yourself in any way, undertake to keep me posted? My address will be the Hotel Sevilla, until further notice."

My good little correspondent promised all that I asked and more, following me to the door of the bank with kindly protestations of his willingness to serve me. As soon as I could break away, I made a straight shoot for the hospital, once more patronizing the expensive auto cab. Much to my surprise, I found Stirling looking better, and one of the hospital doctors who took me aside told me that the crisis was past—had passed apparently during the night. With careful diet and nursing, Stirling had something more than a fighting chance for his life. With this good word I pulled a chair up to the bedside and proceeded to jolly the poor skeleton up a bit.

"Good news!" I said. "The doctor tells me you're going to pull through."

"Of course I am," was the sturdy reply. "Didn't I tell you last night that I couldn't afford to die? Now that I've got your two hundred pounds to lean on——"

"Hold on! Stop right where you are!" I interrupted. "It's only a hundred and ninety-nine and a half. And the way I've been perspiring this morning, I have good tropical hopes of cutting it down to the even ninety-nine."

"You are fat, but efficient—the rar-

est combination on earth," said the sick man, with a bit of the old-time humor in his eye. And then: "Don't tell me that you've let a whole morning go without getting busy."

I knew that was coming, and I was glad to be able to jolly him along some more. In a few words I told him what I had learned from Von Bethberg, and he gave a huge sigh of relief.

"I knew you didn't believe me last night; knew you were just lying like a good friend to keep me going. Own up, Anson; isn't it so?"

"Perhaps," I admitted. "It all seemed straight enough except the goldbug part of it, and the mysterious appearance and disappearance of the yacht."

"But now that you know the yacht is a fact, you'll accept the plate-ship wreck, too, won't you?"

"I guess so. This gossip about Spardoza's fitting out for a contracting job leans pretty heavily over toward your fairy tale about the old galleon. What I can't understand is, why he has waited so long to make the return trip to the island."

"Don't you see?" was the half-impatient rejoinder. "He is waiting until he can be cocksure that I've had time to die."

This opened a new line of surmise.

"You are taking it for granted that he hasn't learned that you were picked up by the tramp and brought here to Havana?" I said.

"Surely he hasn't. In that case he would have burned the wind trying to beat me to it. This fever of mine would have given him just the chance he needed. What did you find out about the two girls?"

"Only a little more than you were able to tell me last night. They are Spardoza's wards, and he has embezzled their patrimony, or otherwise made away with it."

Stirling was silent for a time. Then he said: "Anson, it's up to me to get well on the run. Any day, now, Spardoza may up anchor and sail away for my island. How much money did you bring with you?"

I laughed. "Enough to pay my board for a while, and enough more to buy a ticket back to the States. Why?"

"Cable and get more—a lot more. The minute I am able to get up, I shall have to borrow you blind."

"And you'll pay me back in Peruvian gold bars?" I chuckled.

"Exactly. But, apart from that, I'm going to marry only one of the two Mendez sisters. There'll be one left for you—if you're lucky enough to get her."

It did me good to see him so cheerful; it was the best possible augury for his recovery. Just the same, his joking remark had a sharp edge to it. Nobody loves a fat man, and it is especially true of women—or it had been, in my experience.

"I'm fireproof on that side," I told him. "It has been years since I have been able to persuade any marriageable woman to give me more than one dance at the club annual. You might take your gold and move to Utah and marry them both. But, see here: you don't know where this lost island is! According to your story, nobody knows its location but Spardoza and the captain of the tramp steamer who brought you here."

"That is one of the things that has been driving me mad," he broke out. "The treasure is mine, but I can't find it, and Spardoza can."

"But you had some plan, didn't you?"

"Just a desperate notion that I must get well and shadow Spardoza and follow him when he goes. Then the thought would come that he had probably beaten me to it long ago, and I'd go off the hooks again. What you have just told me—that he is still only making ready to go—has put new life into me."

"Cheer up," I said; "the worst is yet to come. You may trust me to keep cases on Spardoza's movements. If he gets in too big a hurry, perhaps I might even persuade myself to row off in the harbor some dark night and torpedo his yacht."

Stirling turned his hollow eyes upon

me with a look in them like that in the eyes of a collie whose head has just been petted.

"There's a lot of things to find out yet, and you must manage some way to get in touch," he quavered. "Of course, it's no use to think about getting the latitude and longitude of the island from Spardoza; he'll never give up that secret to anybody. There's only the one way—when he goes, I must follow him."

"There is one other chance," I put in. "If we could find the captain of the tramp that brought you here."

Stirling wagged his head hopelessly. "I don't even know the name of the tramp," he objected. "No, there is only the one chance, Anson, and that is never to lose sight of Spardoza's yacht after she leaves Havana harbor."

I'm no seafaring man, goodness knows, but it looked like an extremely large order to me, with mighty little chance of landing it. Supposing we were right on hand and ready to chase the *Estrella* on her leaving day, it said itself that we must have some kind of a craft swift enough to outrun her, and that all the thousand and one chances of sea and weather must be in our favor if we were going to keep the yacht in sight for any considerable length of time.

So I saw difficulties, plenty of them, though I didn't enumerate them for poor Stirling. He had enough of a load to carry as it was, and there was no use in adding to it. So, when he said that he thought he could sleep a little if he didn't have to lie there and watch me perspire, I took myself off to grapple for a few new handholds on the tangle.

CHAPTER V.

A LUCKY ACCIDENT.

The first thing I did was to ask Von Bethberg for a few letters of introduction putting me in touch with the seafaring side of Havana. The initial step in Stirling's plan was to find out if there was anything in the fast-yacht line that we might be able to charter in a hurry. Failing to find anything more promising than a seagoing tug, I hired a launch to take me on an investigating trip across the harbor, picking out an engineer who could patter a little broken English.

In the course of the harbor circling, we chugged around in the neighborhood of a white yacht, with the name *Estrella* painted on it, swinging to its anchor in the middle ground. I asked my boatman if he knew the yacht, and his *"Si, señor"* was expressive of a whole lot. Leading him on a little farther, I found that he knew Spardoza by sight, and was even able to tell me where the sugar planter lived while he was in Havana.

Landing at Regla, the shipping port across the harbor, I turned up a few more pointers. A schooner lying at one of the piers was outfitting for some deep-sea-building job, so I was told—port and location of the job unknown to my informant. There was a small air of mystery here. Nobody seemed to know much about the enterprise for which the schooner was to serve as a common carrier, but I learned a few things which seemed to square fairly well with the buried-treasure hypothesis. A stout, sheer-pole derrick, disassembled, was a part of the schooner's deckload, and so was a complete installation for diving operations.

I asked the Cuban wharfmaster if he knew who had chartered the schooner. "But yes!" he replied. "It is the Señor Spardoza."

"And the captain and crew?" I inquired.

But here the well of information ran dry. If captain and crew had been engaged, the wharfmaster did not know it as yet. He hinted that there was a hitch of some sort, though he did not know what it was, or, if he did know, he wouldn't tell me.

Arguing from this that we could still count upon some little time interval, I went back to the city. Once more with the hot pavements underfoot, the notion seized me to take a street-car ride out to the quarter in which Spardoza was said to live. I hardly know what

I expected to accomplish, but some of the best plow sales I have ever made have come as the result of some such sudden impulse which seemed at the time to be without rhyme or reason.

If I were thin enough to be superstitious, I should say that my good angel had me by the hand, leading me, that hot July afternoon. When the house numbers began to tell me that I was getting warm on the trail of the Spardoza mansion, I persuaded the street-car man to let me get off. He did it, and by the greatest good luck I swung down squarely in front of a modern American automobile, driven by a negro as black as the ace of spades would be if the ace of spades were black at all—as it isn't in any deck of cards I've ever seen.

Then the lucky accident bumped in: street car slowing to a stand, and one hundred and ninety-nine and a half pounds of American flesh and blood and bone stepping off to block the way for the auto which was coming along at a reasonably good clip. There was a squeal of the brakes, a shriek from the tonneau of the machine, and I was hit. Happily it wasn't such a very heavy car, and on the other hand it was colliding with a fairly good-sized man. I don't say that I stopped the car—the ace-of-spades chauffeur probably did that—but I can safely assert that I helped, even if it did tip me over and make me sit down suddenly and pretty hard.

Before I could get up or realize much of anything, a young woman with a face like the one the old painters used to find perhaps once in a century and go raving crazy about because they couldn't transfer it to canvas, was standing over me and beseeching me in perfectly good American to tell her that I wasn't killed. How she guessed which language to use I can't say, but possibly I looked as American—and foolish—as I felt.

"No, I'm not dead yet," I managed to reply; but when I got up I found I had a lame knee. My lady noticed the limp at once.

"You *are* hurt!" she protested, in a voice that was more like the purling of a woodland brook than anything else I can compare it to.

"It is nothing," I hastened to assure her; and I was going to add some foolishness about its being a pleasure to be run over by her—after the manner of the extra-polite people I had been meeting for the past day or so—when she broke in:

"You must let us take you to wherever you were going. It is the very least we can do."

I didn't have any special object in hunting up the Spardoza mansion just at that moment, and the prospect of a drive with a most attractive young woman, who did not seem to be unduly prejudiced against fat people, was not to be lightly tossed aside.

"If you would be so extremely good; my knee *is* a bit lame," I said, adding: "I am stopping at the Sevilla."

At that we moved around to the side door of the machine and my sympathetic helper was absurd enough to ask me to lean upon her. I didn't tell her that props that I leaned upon usually fell down with a crash, or that her hundred and twenty pounds—it couldn't have been more than that—wouldn't fill the propping bill. Just about that time I discovered that she had not been alone in the back seat of the auto. There was another woman there, a perfectly hideous old crone, mulatto dark and forbidding looking. My lady said something in Spanish to this duenna person, who promptly moved over and made room for us.

Immediately my lady gave an order in Spanish to the negro chauffeur, and we were on our way. Having been sales manager for the Turley Plow Company before I got to be its president, it may say itself that I knew how to talk. But circumstances alter cases, and every time I looked around and tried to begin, something would swell up inside of me and I'd go dumb again. I am trying to convey the impression that the young woman was pretty enough to make even a mechanical talking machine run off the track and ditch

itself, and I never would have gotten anywhere if she hadn't helped out.

"You are a stranger in Havana?" she asked, in that purling-brook voice which not even the noise of the motor car could turn into a discord.

"Very," I said, which wasn't as grammatical as it might have been. "I arrived last evening. My home is in the States—in Tennessee."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, with a little indrawing of the breath. "My mother was also from Tennessee, and I, too, was born there—in the Blue Grass."

Of course I wanted to say something about the littleness of the world, but I caught myself right on the edge of the bromide. Instead, I said: "I knew instantly that you were not a Cuban."

"But my father was," she averred, putting it in swiftly as if in the fear that I might be going to say something derogatory about the Cubans.

Now, one of the qualities of salesmanship in steel plows or anything else is the ability to hustle two and two together pretty promptly in order to make the successful four. Here was a young woman who had, or had had, a Cuban father and an American mother, who spoke American perfectly, who was pretty enough to answer all the requirements of Stirling's description, and who had knocked me down and picked me up within a few doors of the Spardoza town house. Could it be possible——

Of course I couldn't turn around and demand her name, but I did the next best thing—fished in my pocket for a card and couldn't find anything but a business card with "Turley Plows" printed all over the face of it.

"Thank you," she said, taking the card and tucking it away somewhere in the recesses of the filmy thing she was wearing—an honor the like of which, I venture to say, the Turley Company's business card never had before; and then, with the quaintest, sweetest little smile that ever blossomed on a pretty face: "If we were in the States, you would wish to sue for damages. My name is Mendez, and this car belongs to Señor José Maria Spardoza."

I knew it—knew it just as well as I knew I was alive! She didn't say which sister she was, but Stirling's description seemed pretty conclusive. Without doubt she was the beautiful Estrella to whom my poor sick man had so suddenly lost his heart. I suppose I ought to have rejoiced, but I didn't. I may as well confess it as think it: for the moment I was sourly jealous.

I hustled that thought out of doors as quickly as possible. Here was a perfectly miraculous chance to learn a lot of things that I needed to know, but to save my soul I couldn't think of any way to begin. On top of that it seemed horribly underhanded to take such a base advantage of my accident and this young charmer's goodness of heart. In the meantime, the car was devouring distance, and whatever was going to be said must be said promptly. So I told a business man's lie.

"How curiously things come about, Miss Mendez!" I remarked. "When you ran me down, I was on my way to your guardian's house. As he is a plantation owner, I thought perhaps I might get him interested in Turley Plows."

"You shall have your opportunity," she promised instantly. "Señor Spardoza will call upon you at your hotel immediately after I shall tell him of the accident."

This put an entirely new and a much better face upon the matter, and relieved me of the necessity of trying to pry into the Spardoza family affairs through my pretty seatmate. I had a hunch that I shouldn't have any compunctions when I should get a chance at Spardoza himself. So, for the remainder of the short drive, we talked like a house afire about other things—Tennessee things, for the greater part.

At the Sevilla, I wouldn't let Miss Mendez get out of the car. My knee wasn't stiff enough to hurt, and, besides, there was plenty of help if I had needed it. Just to reassure her, however, I promised to go to my room and lie down and call a doctor to look at the knee; and so we parted with many

mutual assurances of regard in true Cuban fashion.

All this happened in the afternoon, and after I had had my dinner brought to me, and a doctor with a name as long as your arm had come to tell me that I was a good many miles from being crippled, I began to wonder if I hadn't better go out to the hospital. But before the notion had fairly taken shape Spardoza's card was brought up.

I prepared myself as best I could while the boy was carrying my invitation to the sugar planter to come to my rooms, though I couldn't for the life of me see where I was going to make a beginning. Anything I might say which would touch remotely upon the proposed salvage of the galleon's cargo would immediately betray the fact that Stirling was alive and in Havana, and even the fattest of fat men would make no such mistake as this.

When the door opened to admit my visitor, Stirling's dream picture became an instant reality. If Señor José Maria Spardoza were not a double-dyed villain, he certainly had good grounds for a suit for libel against his face. As I had expected he would do, he brought an interpreter with him; a smooth-faced, dark young man whose English might have been a lot better than it was.

The first shot out of the box was a long-winded and hypercourteous protestation of the desolation which had been wrought in the heart of the Señor Spardoza by the most terrible and unfortunate accident to the Señor Turley. The negro chauffeur, it seemed, had been instantly discharged, and was to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

In reply to this, I turned to and did my level best in salesman English, assuring Spardoza, with many adjectives, that it was the highest possible honor for a man of my avoirdupois to have been knocked down by his exquisite and charming ward. In the midst of it, a happy thought struck me, and I piled it on still thicker. I saw at once that I wasn't going to be able to get any information out of Spardoza himself through the medium of an interpreter; that my only hope lay in getting better acquainted with the two young women who could speak my language. Of course the compunctions rose up here again, but I pushed them aside for Stirling's sake.

After a time, and a good many bandyings back and forth of the complimentary things, I got what I was fishing for. As soon as I was able to be about, so my visitor said, I must present myself at the Spardoza house, if only to show that I really forgave the innocent author of the so terrible misfortune. I promised; and after a few more complimentary salvos on both sides, my visitor bowed himself out, with the sleek-faced interpreter copying every movement of his patron.

An hour later I was at the hospital, where I found Stirling decidedly brighter than he had been on my morning visit.

"I've been waiting," he said, as soon as I came in; and at that I sat down and told him about my launch trip and about seeing the yacht and the schooner and about my talk with the wharfmaster; but right there I let it stop—didn't tell him anything about the automobile accident and what had come of it, chiefly because I thought there was no use in stirring him up over a meeting which as yet held merely a promise of possibilities.

"There's a hitch of some sort, just as that wharfmaster said," he averred, after I had finished talking about the schooner which was being loaded so slowly. "Spardoza wouldn't wait so long as this merely to make sure that I was safely dead. There is something else in the way. If I could only get up and stir around, I'm sure I could dig it out."

"I'm here to do the digging," I responded, "and so long as there doesn't seem to be any immediate danger of the other expedition starting out to get ahead of us, we can afford to take it a bit easy. In the meantime, I'll try to find out what the Spardoza obstacle is, and maybe I can help it to grow a little."

And with this I told him to try to

get a good night's sleep, and had myself driven back to the hotel.

CHAPTER VI.

A CHANCE TO INVEST.

The next day the temperature was red-hot. They tell you in Havana that the normal summer maximum is ninety degrees or less; and they carefully omit to say anything about the frightful humidity. But it didn't do me any good to complain. The minute I opened my head somebody would say: "But, ah, the señor is so *extremely* large!"

A part of the forenoon I spent knocking about the harbor front and trying to get a line upon a craft of some sort in which we could chase the *Estrella* when the time should come—if the time shouldn't break in before Stirling was able to make a fight for his rights. Having repeated the failure of the preceding day in this, I spent the remainder of the forenoon at the hospital. To my great joy, it was evident that Stirling was really on the mend. Before leaving the *quinta,* I had a talk with the head doctor, asking him how soon the patient would be able to travel, letting him infer, if he wanted to, that I was going to take the poor fellow home to the States. I was told that Stirling would not be able to endure a railroad journey for at least two or three weeks.

"But how about a sea voyage, doctor?" I inquired.

"There would be less danger."

This was encouraging, so far as it went, and it left me foot-loose to make my party call at the Spardoza house. But before going there I had another interview with Von Bethberg in which the hint of the day before was repeated; namely, that the old sugar planter was hard up for ready cash.

"But surely he can borrow!" I interjected.

Von Bethberg's answer was a shrug. "Not so much easily. There are too many lenders who have never been repaid. Señor Spardoza is not a customer of ours, so I am gifing away no confidences when I say that his extrafaganzes have made him a borrower to the limits already."

Here was an idea which I carried with me out to the residence suburb where the Spardoza mansion stood back among the trees in its spacious grounds. Was it believable that the old spendthrift couldn't raise the comparatively small sum of money needed to pay for the chartering of the schooner, when all the wealth of Golconda was waiting for him at the bottom of the island lagoon?

This time I had provided myself with a proper visiting card, and after I had sat for a few minutes in a cool, darkened drawing-room with windows opening out upon an inner court, my pretty motorist came to me, accompanied by the wolfish old duenna.

My welcome was all that any man, fat or thin, could have asked for, and after the lame knee had been inquired about—by this time I had almost forgotten that I had a knee—we got better acquainted at the true American rate of speed. Just about the time when I was thinking that the speed had better be slowed up a little for Stirling's sake, the young woman said a thing that I had been wondering if she wouldn't say sooner or later:

"I should like to have you meet my sister, Mr. Turley. Will you excuse me a moment until I can go and fetch her?"

Of course I said I'd be delighted, and presently the little, dark-haired, brown-eyed sweetness came back with the sister in question; a statuesque young person with a creamy complexion, eyes that tried their hardest to be blue, cool lips, pretty teeth, and a pleasant smile to show them; a handsome young woman, but not to be spoken of in the same day with my little motorist. Naturally I couldn't help thinking of what Stirling had said about there being one of the sisters left for me, and I saw instantly that, so far as myself and the second sister were concerned, we had each of us drawn a total blank. You can tell, right away. She wasn't quickening any blood in my veins, and,

on her side, her eyes were saying, as plainly as possible: "Mercy me! How dreadfully fat!"

After the introduction, in which, by the way, *my* Miss Mendez called her sister "Tita" instead of "Marilla," the conversation became three-cornered, though I could see that the blue-eyed sister wasn't very pointedly interested.

It does me a lot of good to remember now that I didn't say a single word to swing the talk around to the subject of the steam yacht's latest voyage. That voyage tumbled in naturally and of its own accord, after we had been speaking of sundry American multi-millionaires and the gorgeous little ships in which they visited foreign parts of the world.

"Cousin José sails every year," the statuesque sister put in; "and sometimes he takes us with him. His yacht is the *Estrella,* and you may have seen it in the harbor."

I didn't say whether I had or hadn't. Yet what I did say probably led to all the rest:

"I suppose you go around among the islands generally, don't you?"

"Almost always," said the cool-lipped one; "though this summer we went to the Isthmus. On the way back, such a sad, sad thing happened. Our engines broke down, and we anchored under the shelter of one of the small, unnamed islands in the Caribbean while the men made repairs. On this island we found a castaway, a young man who was the only survivor from a schooner which had been sunk in a hurricane. He was sick and almost starved."

Here it was, out at last, and as large as life. Before I could bite my tongue I had flung in the question which the little story seemed to ask for:

"You brought him home with you?"

My Miss Mendez shook her head sorrowfully, and her reply, made after the other sister had risen and turned to the window looking out upon the court, was low-toned:

"It was dreadful. As Tita has said, the man was sick; and that night it developed that he had the terrible form of typhus which is the scourge of the Central American country he had shipped from. What was done was cruelly necessary, I suppose, but it will always seem harsh and hard-hearted to me. We had our own doctor aboard, and the disease is so fearfully contagious that he said we simply *mustn't* take the young man with us. Cousin José didn't consult us, of course. The poor fellow was put ashore in the night and left, and Cousin José promised to send a boat back after him at once from the Isle of Pines."

"And you never heard what became of him?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," said my Miss Mendez—the other sister was still standing at the window with her back to us. "He was taken to the Isle of Pines, as Cousin José promised; but he died there a short time afterward."

After this, as you would imagine, I was quite ready to ignore Señor José Maria Spardoza's claims to consideration on my part. The old villain had not only left Stirling to die on the desert island; he had deliberately lied to the two women about it afterward. And the tears in the dark eyes of the one who was telling me about it were a sufficient proof that poor Grant was not the only one who had been touched on the day when the Spardoza yacht had been laid up for repairs in the lagoon.

I wanted to ask if their guardian cousin had any more voyages in prospect for the summer, and again while I hesitated the information was thrown at me. Something was said about Havana as a summer residence, and I remarked that I didn't suppose any one stayed in the city in the summer except those who had to. At this I was told that their stay was only temporary; that they expected to go to sea again in the yacht before very long, this time to some South American port.

Shortly after this I began to take my leave, not because I was anxious to, but because there didn't seem to be any reasonable excuse for prolonging what was at best but a formal call in response to Spardoza's invitation. But in the court the sleek-faced secretary

who had acted as Spardoza's interpreter stopped me to say that Señor José begged the honor of an interview if I could spare a few minutes more. Accordingly I crossed the court at the heels of the secretary and was ushered into another of the cool, dark rooms; this one, it seemed, serving as a sort of office for the master of the house.

Again there was a long rigmarole of the courtesies, Spardoza asking after my health in more different ways than you could shake a stick at before your arm would ache. Since I was by this time beginning to get the hang of things Cuban and roundabout, I matched him up good and proper, slinging in the compliments until I could see that the secretary was hard put to it to find the Spanish equivalents for my high-flown phrases. I had an inside feeling that Spardoza hadn't called me in merely to match diplomatic nothings with me, and the milk in the coconut began to leak out a little when the talk turned upon business.

Before the secretary had waded through half a dozen interpretations, I was put wise, as the saying goes. Spardoza had my business card, the one I had given to the dark-eyed little charmer, and in the short interval at his disposal he had been looking me up in whatever answers to Dun's or Bradstreet's in the West Indies. Past that, it was evident that somebody had been giving me an excellent send-off in a financial way, and I soon found that Spardoza imagined he was talking to an American millionaire.

It was really amusing to see how slowly and cleverly he worked around to the real thing. He was in need of money to carry out a plan which promised untold wealth. To make a long story short, I was finally offered the choice of becoming either an investor in the scheme or a lender at any rate of interest I chose to ask—though he hadn't explained, and didn't explain, what the scheme was. But what made me warm under the collar was the way in which, just at the last, and by the subtlest innuendo, he betrayed the fact that he was trading upon the charms of the pretty young woman who had knocked me down in the street. He seemed to take it for granted that I was roped and hog-tied and could be bled accordingly.

It was all I could do to resist the temptation to hand him, through the interpreter, a few good, round, American bluntnesses. By this time I was not so sure that the interpreter was needed. From some little signs that I had been observing I was convinced that Spardoza understood more English than he professed to. But for Stirling's sake, and for the little girl's, I stepped cautiously, telling him that I would take his proposal under consideration and give him an answer in a day or so. And with that I got away.

For the next three or four days nothing much happened. Stirling continued to recover, though he was still on a milk diet. I told him about the interview with Spardoza, but omitted any and all mention of the young women, so he did not yet know that I had met either of them. During this interval I did not go to the Spardoza house again. To tell the plain truth, I was afraid to go. Decent loyalty to Stirling demanded that I should break things off short with the young woman upon whom he had set his heart; I knew that if I didn't break them off short there would be something doing. So I put in the time sitting with Stirling at the hospital and knocking about the maritime part of the city making inquiries about the boat we should need when the critical time should come.

This search for a boat, which there didn't seem to be any prospect of finding, took me about the harbor a good bit, and on one of these trips I picked up a few more items about the *Casco*, the schooner which Spardoza was trying to charter. Posing as an American tourist killing time, I got acquainted with her owner, an expatriated Ohio man who was a sugar broker and owned a few coasting vessels.

This man, Burdick, talked freely about the *Casco*. She had come to Cuba with a mixed cargo, and had

missed a return trip by being laid up for repairs. With a little judicious encouragement, Mr. Burdick told me the rest of it. Spardoza had come to him with an offer to charter the *Casco;* had chartered her, in fact, though the charter money had not yet been paid over. He was to furnish his own skipper and crew, and she was to carry machinery to some South American port where Spardoza had secured a contract for building a lighthouse.

"Señor Spardoza?" I put in. "Isn't he the rich sugar planter that I've heard about?"

Burdick shrugged.

"Spardoza has the name of being rich; and he was rich once. But he does business chiefly on a cash basis now—because he can't get credit. You're an outsider, Mr. Turley, and I don't mind telling you—but that's the hitch on the *Casco* charter. He won't tell me where he is going to take the schooner, or who is going to sail her. Under those conditions, I'm asking him to put up a bond for her full value. That's no more than fair to me, don't you think?"

Of course I agreed with him, and then stuck in a question about the contracting part of it, asking how it came about that a sugar planter happened to be building lighthouses. At this Burdick shook his head and helped himself to another of my cigars. He said he had no idea that Spardoza was really building lighthouses; he even went so far as to say that the derrick and diving apparatus had probably been loaded as a blind, and that the *Casco's* real cargo would doubtless be something quite different—and much more warlike. Spardoza had been mixed up in every revolution that came down the pike, and it was an open secret that the rebels on a certain island not a thousand miles distant were at that moment paying all sorts of prices for arms and ammunition.

At this I expressed some surprise at Burdick's attitude, and asked him if, as the *Casco's* owner, he wasn't taking a pretty big risk. Whereupon he laughed and winked slyly.

"When you are in Rome, you soon follow the Roman example, Mr. Turley. Such things are not thought much of here. If Spardoza takes the *Casco,* he'll practically buy her; and I shan't figure in it personally."

Having thus established the status of the schooner, I next tried to find out if Spardoza had made any arrangements for a captain and crew. Here, again, I had a bit of good luck. On the day following the talk with the sugar-broker shipowner, I was in Regla, and at the *Casco's* wharf I ran across a hard-bitted, one-eyed old sinner who looked as if he might be taking stock of the schooner.

It didn't take me very long to scrape an acquaintance, though the old fellow, a Maine Yankee by his speech, was crabbedly crusty. It developed presently that he was—or was going to be—the *Casco's* skipper. I asked a lot of questions, making them sound like the idle curiosity of a tourist who had nothing better to do, and got short answers for the better part. But a few facts leaked out. My ancient mariner admitted that he didn't know the destination of the voyage as yet, also that he was doubtful about his pay.

By this time I had progressed far enough so that I could ask him to take me aboard and show me around, which he did. The *Casco* was a freight carrier of the sort they used to build by the mile up on the Maine coast and saw off in lengths to suit customers. Her cabin accommodations were strictly limited, and I thought at the time that I'd hate to have to make a voyage in her.

Naturally before leaving him I pried into the old skipper to find out, if I could, the probable time of the *Casco's* departure for the unknown port; but as to this he professed to be as much in the dark as I was. He was under orders to sail when he should be called upon—and he hadn't yet seen the color of his employer's money.

This last remark of his gave me an idea. They say every man has his price, and from the hungry look that came into this old sea dog's single eye

when he spoke of his pay, I gathered that he could be bought if the necessity required it.

"This Señor Spardizza, or whatever you call him," said I; "he has plenty of money?"

"Cuts a pretty wide dash," was the grouchy rejoinder. "That's his yacht," with a wave of a lean arm toward the *Estrella* swinging at her anchor a little way out from the shore.

Walking up the pier with the piratical-looking old man a minute or two later, I ventured upon another move.

"I never owned a lighthouse, Captain Whitcomb, but I'm interested in them," I said. "When you find out the location of the one you're going to carry this schoonerload to, I might make it worth your while to tell me."

An honest man would have told me where to get off, right there and then; but my old leather-faced sinner merely said: "How much?"

I took out my pocket roll and skinned a twenty from it for him, taking good care to let him see that there was plenty more where that came from. The avarice in his one eye as he pocketed the bank note sufficiently advertised his weak point.

"We'll scrape around and find a twin brother to that when you can send word to me at the Hotel Sevilla," I told him; and, while he made no reply in words, I saw that he was going to earn the other twenty.

At the pier foot, where my launch was waiting, he broke the grumpy silence to say: "I cal'late you might's well tell me what your game is, fust as last. I c'n keep my mouth shut."

"You mean that you'd like to earn a little more money?" I laughed. "All right; if you can add to the location of this new lighthouse the time you'll sail for it, we'll make the twins triplets."

The next development in the fairy tale came that evening, at the hotel. At odd moments I had been making friends with one of the night clerks, a young fellow named Gaston, from my own neck of woods in Tennessee. When I went for my mail young Gaston drew me aside.

"I want to give you a small pointer, Mr. Turley, if you'll let me. The other day, when I happened to come on duty a little early, I saw an old Spaniard named Spardoza sending his card up to your rooms. You may tell me it's none of my business if you like, but—er—is he trying to borrow money of you?"

"Perhaps," I admitted cautiously. "Why?"

"We are fellow Americans, and—well, I don't want to see you get stung—that's all."

"Thank you," I said. "Anything else?"

"Yes. Spardoza has a fellow working for him who has been in the Cuban secret service—man named Velasquez. About an hour ago, Velasquez was here, trying to pry out a lot of information about you—how long you'd been here, what brought you to Cuba, and all that. I thought I'd better tell you."

I thought about it for a moment. Velasquez was doubtless Spardoza's secretary interpreter. If he should discover that I had come to Havana to nurse a man named Grant Stirling——

"How much did this Velasquez find out?" I asked.

"All he wanted to, I guess. He knows you're here nursing a sick friend from the States."

This was a bit disturbing. If Spardoza once got on Stirling's trail—— I could see instantly what would happen. The old robber had been dawdling along, taking his time about outfitting his expedition because he didn't see any special reason for hurry—with Stirling safely dead on his island, as Spardoza had every reason to believe was the fact. But the knowledge that Stirling was alive and in Havana would doubtless put a sudden crimp in the dawdling. I fancied Spardoza would raise the *Casco's* charter money swiftly in some way, if he had to mortgage his immortal soul to get it.

These reflections made me doubly cautious. When I came down from my rooms, prepared to make an evening

visit to Stirling, I was careful to make an inventory of the loungers in the hotel office before going out. Velasquez was there, as I more than half expected he would be. He was reading a newspaper, and appeared to be oblivious of his surroundings, but when I went out to the street I saw him drop the paper and jump up to follow me.

That was enough, and I made up my mind to give this smooth-faced young scamp the time of his life. They say a fat man can't walk very far or very fast, but I'm here to call the man who said it a liar by the clock. For a solid hour I led my shadow a foot race all over Havana, up one street and down another; out along the Malecon where the band was playing to a full house in the park, back up the Prado, away out toward Vedado and back again, around and about until I had fairly worn him out. And when I had finally lost him, I took a taxi and went to the hospital.

But I knew this couldn't be kept up indefinitely. Sooner or later this young rascal would pick up the trail, and then, if this should happen before Stirling was able to travel, the end would come pretty suddenly. We'd wake up the next morning to find the *Estrella's* anchorage empty and the *Casco* gone—most probably before my avaricious old sinner of a one-eyed skipper could get time to communicate with me

CHAPTER VII.

THE LUCRETIA BORGIA WAY.

A week passed without any incident worth recording. Stirling continued to improve, and I visited him only when I was sure I wasn't followed. For the rest, I put in a good deal of time looking for the boat that refused to be found. The requirements were hard to fill. We must have a craft fast enough to keep the *Estrella* in sight in case she should take the alarm and run away from the *Casco;* also, it must be a craft that wouldn't arouse undue suspicion—which barred the seagoing-tug idea.

During this interval, Spardoza called on me twice at the Sevilla, and didn't happen to find me either time. But on the third occasion he did find me, and there was more talk about the borrowing-and-lending proposition; a talk in which I saw that I couldn't stand him off very much longer without saying either yes or no. In the meantime, I had heard nothing from Elisha Whitcomb, the one-eyed skipper. Twice I had been over to Regla in the hope that I might run across him, but for obvious reasons I didn't dare to be seen too much in the vicinity of the *Casco.*

Matters were at this stand on a certain evening, when, having once more dodged Velasquez, I went out to see Stirling. By this time the sick man was able to be up and around, and to walk about a bit in the hospital grounds, though he was still rather weak and shaky.

"Well, how about it?" I said, when we had taken our chairs out upon the upper veranda upon which Stirling's room opened and settled ourselves for a talk. "Are you fit to take hold now, if the need should come suddenly?"

Stirling laughed in his old, light-hearted way. "I don't believe I could quite whip my weight in wild cats yet, but I guess I'm good for anything that may tumble in. I had a talk with the boss doctor to-day, and he says I may go home whenever I feel like it, provided I take a long water route."

"In other words, a sea voyage won't hurt you," I put in. "That's good; all we ask, at present."

From that we talked along about the prospects for the immediate future. As matters stood, we were safely blocked until Spardoza should make some move, since he was the only one who could show us the way to the fairy-tale island. And, so far as we knew, he was not any nearer ready to make the move than he had been at the time of my arrival.

It was while we were sitting there, chewing over the probabilities, that I caught a glimpse of a man going through the grounds below. He was hurrying toward the gates, and the figure of him was one which had grown exceedingly familiar to me. Miguel,

Stirling's sick-room attendant, was within call, and I told him to go quickly and find out for me the name of the hurrying man.

Miguel proved to be a good scout; I had been tipping him pretty liberally, and I suppose he was willing to have it happen again. He was back in a jiffy with the news that the man had taken a taxi at the gate, and that he had been named by the gatekeeper. It was Señor Martino Velasquez. Also, he added that the object of Velasquez's visit had been to have a look at the hospital records.

I had previously told Stirling of Velasquez's efforts to track me, so we both knew at once what his discovery of Stirling's name on the records would mean. Stirling wasn't strong enough yet to look the thing fairly in the face, and for a time I thought his excitement and despair would put him to bed again. He was cocksure that Spardoza would sail at once, that very night, and with him would vanish all hope of our ever finding Galleon Island.

Stirling's attitude at this crisis was a trifle hard to understand. Of all the men I had ever known, he had been perhaps the least touched with the money hunger; like a good many engineers, he was wrapped up in his profession, caring much more to see a good job well done than for any money he was going to make out of it for himself. But now one would have thought that his life depended upon getting those gold bars out of the old galleon —if, indeed, there were any gold bars there, a proposition which was still open to question in my mind.

"You're letting this thing grab you too hard, Grant," I told him. "Supposing the worst does happen and Spardoza beats you to the home plate, you can't lose what you've never had; and, anyway, money isn't the only thing in the world."

"You don't understand," he broke out impatiently. "I don't care for the money so much, but I do hate to be robbed. Besides, there is the girl."

"What has she got to do with it?" I demanded.

"Everything. From what you have told me, it is perfectly plain that Spardoza has robbed her and her sister. He's got to be made to sweat for that, Anson, and it's going to take money to do it."

I thought this was pretty largely a sick man's distorted idea of things; but the big fact remained, just the same. Stirling believed there was a king's ransom lying at the bottom of his island lagoon, and as matters were shaping themselves he stood to lose it.

After a time I got him cooled down a little, showing him that Spardoza's money cramp wasn't going to be cured in a single night; and, so talking, we wore out another hour or two. Just as I was getting ready to leave, I heard a slight noise in the room behind us—Stirling's room, in which the single incandescent light had been left turned on. Without breaking the talk, I drew out my watch and held it up to the light, as if to determine the time.

The watch crystal made a passable mirror, as I hoped it would, and gave me a miniature view of the rearward interior. In the tiny picture reflected in the glass I saw a man tiptoeing across to the table at the head of Stirling's bed. At first I thought it was Miguel; then I saw that the intruder was a stranger and that he was not wearing the hospital uniform.

With a movement catlike in its caution, the man approached the table, upon which stood a glass of water. Quite distinctly I saw him uncork a small vial and empty the contents of it into the water. I think it was only by chance that he happened to keep his face averted so that I could not get a glimpse of it, but now that the first shock of astonishment was over, I recognized him well enough. It was the ubiquitous Velasquez again.

I let the intruder get away, and gave no alarm, chiefly for Stirling's sake. I thought he'd had enough for one night; but a few minutes later, when I left him, I took the glass of water with me, saying that I would send Miguel up with a fresh supply. Once in the corridor and out of Stirling's

sight, I covered the glass with my handkerchief and carried it carefully across the grounds to the hospital laboratory.

It so happened that in my numerous visits I had met the little French chemist, Villaume, who had charge of the laboratory, and I gave him the glass of water with the request that he analyze it. He let me smoke a cigar in his study while the process went on; and when he brought me the result, his broken English had been completely lost, swept away in a perfect whirlwind of wrath. Out of the fiery torrent of Gallic imprecations I picked the truth at last. A deliberate attempt had been made to murder Stirling; the vial which had been emptied into the glass of water had contained a fresh culture of typhus germs, and enough of them to kill a horse!

Naturally I left the laboratory about half stunned. That such Lucretia Borgia methods should be practiced in the twentieth century seemed about as incredible as a thing could well be. But the horrible fact remained, and I pulled myself together and took the necessary precautionary steps. The faithful Miguel was found and instructed to make some excuse to sleep in Stirling's room, and upon no account to admit any stranger, no matter how urgent his errand.

This command laid upon the nurse and backed up with good coin of the realm, I went to the hotel, but not to sleep. Oddly enough, it was not altogether the thought of Stirling's peril and involvement that kept me awake. It was quite as much the reflection that the little brown-eyed beauty who might some day be Stirling's wife was utterly and wholly in the power of this unspeakable old villain who evidently regarded human life as of no more value than that of a fly.

CHAPTER VIII.

ELISHA WHITCOMB.

After the bad night, I got to work bright and early. A glimpse of the harbor obtained from the Fruit Line pier showed me the *Estrella* still at her anchorage, so that much was assured. There had been no night flitting, as Stirling had feared there might be. But there was a smoke plume floating from the yacht's stack to prove that her boilers were fired and she was under steam.

Not to lose any time, I chartered a launch and went across to the *Casco's* wharf. Signs of renewed activity about the schooner were not lacking. Stevedores were hurrying stores aboard, and a couple of sailors were shaking out the canvas and overhauling it; but I looked in vain for the one-eyed skipper. After wasting an hour or more in a fruitless search for Whitcomb, I recrossed to the city, meaning to fall upon Von Bethberg in a final attempt to get help in the exasperating search for a vessel which we could charter. I had hardly shaken hands with the good little German before he told me that they had been telephoning for me from the hotel; that some seafaring man was there who wanted to see me in a hurry.

Since a seafaring man might mean the chance of the boat we were needing, I hastened to the Sevilla. Young Gaston was taking the place of one of the day men, and he explained the telephone call.

"There's an old sea captain in your rooms, waiting for you; made us smuggle him up there while we were trying to get you on the wire. It seems to be something pretty urgent," was the message Gaston gave me; and a minute or two later I opened the door of my sitting room to find Elisha Whitcomb walking the floor, with his single eye flying all the signals of impatience.

"I was jest cal'latin' 'twa'n't no use to wait any longer," he drawled; and then he gave his news: "The blue peter's h'isted."

"You mean that you've got your sailing orders, and have come for the other two twenties?" I asked.

The hungry look in that one baleful eye of his was a sight to remember.

"One on 'em," he croaked, with a dry rattle in his throat which showed how hard it was for him to have to cut the reward in two. "We sail to-night

on the flood, but I don't know no more'n a goat where we're goin'."

The crisis had come, and we were not ready for it. In a number of years of good, sharp business scrapping, I had never felt so completely at loss.

"You think you're sure of your money from Spardoza, do you?" I inquired.

"He cal'lates to pay me afore we leave the harbor."

I thought I saw what had happened, or was going to happen. Von Bethberg had intimated to me in one of our interviews that a man of Spardoza's stripe always had one alternative; namely, in applying to some money shark in the city who would be willing to take a long chance. Spardoza had a story to tell which, if he could contrive to get it believed, would furnish him all the money he needed, provided he were willing to share the plunder. Quite naturally, this would be a last resort for the old scoundrel, but I made sure he was going to take it. And we were as helpless as a couple of cats tied in a bag.

It was not until after the one-eyed skipper had pocketed his second bribe and was edging toward the door that I thought of a desperate expedient. As a matter of fact, I felt that the disappointment of knowing that Spardoza's expedition had actually set sail would put Stirling on his back in bed again; and I was ready to do anything to avert such a calamity.

"One minute, Captain Whitcomb!" I interposed, halting him on his sidestepping progress toward the door. "You are still open to a proposal to earn a little more money for yourself?"

"Mebbe," he said shortly.

"Here it is, then. I'm not specially interested in lighthouses, save as a matter of ordinary curiosity, but I've always wanted to make a voyage in a windjammer. More than that, I have a sick friend here whose doctors tell him that he ought to take a sea voyage for his health. How about taking a couple of passengers with you on this trip?"

Once more the skipper turned his baleful eye upon me.

"You say 'him' and 'he'—'tain't a woman you're takin' along with you, is it?"

At this I was able to laugh, and it did me good—took a little of the strain off.

"Do I look like a man who would be running away with a woman in a two-by-four schooner?" I asked.

He didn't say anything more about that part of it, but he was evidently counting the risks. That gave me an opportunity to count them, too, and they looked pretty big. It was a good deal like trying to take passage in a pirate ship with an excellent prospect that the pirate captain would one day discover us and make us walk the plank to the sharks. Stirling's poisoned glass of water was all the assurance anybody would ask as to how much mercy we might expect from Señor José Maria Spardoza. But by this time the romance of the thing had gotten hold of me until I was as big a lunatic as Stirling.

"You can afford to take a chance or two, Whitcomb," I urged. "We'll put up with whatever cabin fare you've got to offer, and keep out of sight when you tell us to. And I don't need to say that it will be money in your pocket."

That mention of the word "money" did the business. It was the one word that Captain Elisha Whitcomb couldn't withstand. As once before, he said gruffly: "How much?"

I answered him with another question: "How long are you provisioned for?"

"A month."

"And in that time you could sail, say, around the Windward Islands and back again, couldn't you? Suppose we make it two hundred dollars a passenger?"

That got him. "In advance?" he demanded.

"If you like, yes."

While one might count ten he hesitated; then he shot me again with that bad eye. "I'd like to know how many lies you're tellin' me," he growled. "Fust off, you say it's lighthouses, and

now you say it's a sick friend. What be you drivin' at, anyway?"

At this I laughed again. "You mustn't expect us to tell you more than your own employer is telling you," I countered. "We shan't ask much, and what we do ask we'll pay for."

"But you ain't wantin' to let Spardoza know that you're goin' along?"

"*You* don't want him to know," I corrected. Then: "Call it a bargain, and I'll pay our passage money now, on the spot." And I drew the tried, trusty, and all-powerful roll of bills from my pocket.

That settled it. The old sinner could no more resist the sight of ready money than he could fly.

"You'll hev to come aboard after dark," he stipulated. "And there'll be times when I may hev to keep you under hatches. I don't know no more'n a goat what you want to do it for, but that's nothin' to me." And with that he pocketed his money and departed.

CHAPTER IX.

A VISITOR.

With the old skipper out of the way, I had a chance to measure up the fantastic absurdity of the thing—to say nothing of the dangers. What we two, and one of us a sick man at that, could hope to accomplish as passengers aboard the *Casco*, was more than I could imagine. It seemed certain that nothing more than churlish toleration could be expected from Whitcomb, and if we should try to tamper with his crew, we would be likely to go ashore somewhere in irons on a charge of inciting mutiny on the high seas.

From Spardoza and whatever outfit he might carry with him on the *Estrella* we might expect even a shorter shrift. And when the two vessels should anchor together in the island lagoon, concealment on our part would no longer be possible. Altogether it promised to be the most ridiculous and perilous situation that could be cooked up, and I felt as if I needed some one to come and knock me on the head—knock a little of the cold, everyday, business sense, which I seemed to have lost, back into me.

But, in spite of the ridiculous and unnerving absurdities, the big push persisted. If Spardoza should get away without our being able to follow him, Stirling would certainly go to pieces again. Without being too much of a money grabber myself, I could see what it would mean to him to have a fabulous fortune almost in his hands and then to lose it. As a perfectly well man he might be able to see things differently; but in his present condition the disappointment would likely go a good way toward driving him mad.

Seeing nothing for it but to go on as I had begun, I was pulling myself together to make a list of the things we should need to take with us when a boy came to the door of my sitting room to announce a visitor. Before I could get out of my chair, Miss Mendez—*my* Miss Mendez—looking as scared as if she had been sent for and couldn't come, had entered the room, closing the door behind her.

I knew well enough why she looked scared; I had been in Cuba long enough to learn the ironclad conventions that are clamped upon the women of the country.

"You—you wish to see me?" I stammered, getting up to place for her a chair which she seemed not to see.

"I *had* to come," she faltered, and then stopped short—at the sheer enormity of it, I suppose—and I actually thought she was going to faint.

"Call in the American half of you," I threw in promptly. "I am your friend, you know, and if we were in old Tennessee you'd feel free to come to see me, if the occasion demanded."

"I—I came in a taxi," she murmured in a sort of choked whisper. "I slipped out of the house and r-ran away. I had to, you know."

"I'm sure I am greatly honored," I hastened to say, adding: "We can have the bell boy in if you feel that you really must be chaperoned."

"No, no!" she protested quickly. "I must say what I have to say and hurry back before I'm missed. I am—we

are leaving the city to-day—to-night—and—and——"

"You are making too hard work of it," I protested. "Sit down and talk freely to me, just as you would to—er—to your brother, if you had one."

"I want to—I must—it is too terrible! Tell me: you are down here nursing a sick friend, are you not?"

"I am."

"And the friend is the young man Tita told you about—the young man who was left on the island because he was sick with the fever?"

"You are right again," I answered.

For a moment she seemed to be struggling pitiably with some sense of fitness, or compunction, or something of that sort. Then the irrepressible question burst out: "How did he get here to Havana?"

I did not like to tell her that it was no thanks to her scoundrel of a guardian, so I merely stated the bare fact:

"He was taken off the island by the captain of a tramp steamer some days after your cousin's yacht left."

Again there was a struggle, and if the signs meant anything it was bigger than the former one. But, as before, the irresistible thing had to be said.

"A dreadful thing—a perfectly horrible thing—has been done, Mr. Turley. I don't know what it is; I overheard only a little of what Martino Velasquez told Cousin José. But it has something to do with your friend. Martino said that he would never leave the *quinta*—the hospital—alive!"

I thought she didn't need to put the tears into her eyes to tell how much she was concerned about Stirling's well-being, and I hastened to comfort her.

"Calm yourself," I said. "Grant Stirling is recovering, and he is going to keep on recovering. We needn't go into particulars, but I can assure you that I am speaking from certain knowledge of the fact."

"You are *sure?*" she gasped.

"Quite sure."

That was when she came the nearest to breaking down. "Oh, I'm so glad!" she burst out, and the mere saying of it was a sob. But in a moment she gathered herself and went on: "You don't know what a frightful burden you have lifted for me. Now I can say the other thing that must be said. Cousin José has been trying to borrow money from you, hasn't he?"

I couldn't see any reason why she shouldn't be told, so I said: "He has."

"You mustn't lend it to him!" It was partly a beseeching and partly a command.

"Why mustn't I?"

"There are two reasons. For one, he will never pay you back—he never pays anybody back; for another, he would use it to rob your friend."

I saw then that she knew all about the story of the old galleon wreck and the gold bars, real or mythical—as she naturally would, having been present when Stirling was giving his secret away on the day of the rescue which was no rescue.

"And you think for Stirling's sake ——" I began, but she interrupted quickly:

"For his sake and for your own. I—I can't help feeling responsible. If it hadn't been for the motor-car accident, you would never have known Cousin José—or he wouldn't have known you. You are good and generous, and you have the kind heart. I couldn't keep silence when I knew."

"You may calm yourself again," I said, as genially as I could. "I'm not going to lend your cousin the money to finance his buccaneering expedition against my friend, you may be sure of that. What I'd like to know now is, if he stands any chance of getting it elsewhere. I'm not asking you to tell me, of course; you are a member of his family—more's the pity."

"I am afraid he will get it elsewhere; he has many resources," she answered with the frank American half of her. "He has told Tita and me that we shall go on another voyage with him to-night, as I have said."

"Why should he take you and your sister along?" I asked.

"I do not know; it is his will—his command. And we have always obeyed. We have little liberty. But now I must

go. I have stayed too long as it is. Will you tell your friend from us that we are sorry and that we hope the yacht will sink before it ever reaches his island?"

"With you two on board of it?" I smiled.

"That would matter little. Our lives —my sister's and mine—are not so happy that we should care to keep them in a wicked cause."

"You mean that Señor Spardoza does not treat you well?" I interposed, and I could feel the hair bristling at the back of my neck.

She bit her lip and turned her face away and was silent for a moment. But when her eyes met mine again there was a certain hardness in them that was pitiful to see.

"He would sell either or both of us if the price were high enough; he would do anything for money."

The talk was getting painful, and not only painful, but provocative of all sorts of barbaric emotions in me. The Lord knows I'm peaceful enough; most fat men are; but if I could have got my hands on Spardoza's neck just at that moment, I think I could have made him look pop-eyed, and done it without turning a hair. The little girl who had risked so much for Stirling and me was leaving, and I walked with her through the corridor.

"You say you have a taxi?" I asked.

"Yes. Mariana, our old housekeeper, is waiting in it for me. You mustn't come down to the street."

"I shan't," I promised; and then, even against the chance that Spardoza might scare her and make her give it away, I handed her a word of comfort: "You have done all you tried to do, and more. And you mustn't worry a single minute about anything that may come rolling down the big road in the next few days. We'll take care of everything, Stirling and I, and it'll be a lot easier for us now that we know that a snap shot taken at Señor Spardoza isn't going to hit either you or your sister. That's about all I can say at present, but——"

"You have a plan?" she asked impulsively.

"A sort of a plan—dug right out of the heart of bedlam," I answered; and with that I let her go.

Having started the madhouse plan by striking the bargain with Whitcomb, there was nothing to do but to prepare for carrying it out. The preparation was simple enough. A visit to the hospital, in which I told Stirling what I had done and got his enthusiastic approval, and in which I didn't tell him anything about Miss Mendez's visit, ate up the rest of the forenoon. Cautioning Stirling to keep to his room so that any Spardoza spy who might come prying around might think that he was still unable to be discharged, I went back to the city, made a few purchases for Grant and myself, the buyings including a little arsenal of good American weapons with the ammunition therefor, and got everything moved over to the other side of the harbor in readiness for the after-dark going aboard.

Then ensued an unnerving wait. I had no means of knowing what Spardoza was doing, but the yacht was still kept with steam up, and there was a good bit of going back and forth between her and the shore, so I concluded that the old scamp had made his money raise in some way. Before leaving the hospital I had made arrangements for Stirling's discharge so there would be nothing to do after dark but to fetch him in a taxi. Flood tide, the almanac told me, would be at nine o'clock, which would make us hustle the after-dinner embarking.

Happily there was no hitch; not the slightest. After a hasty dinner at the Sevilla, I paid my bill and took a taxi for the hospital. Stirling was ready and waiting, a good bit nervous and trembly, to be sure, but all keyed up with excitement. We made the trip to the water front, where I had a motor launch ready, without incident; and in a few minutes we were landed at Regla, passing the yacht on the way over, on the after deck of which we saw the old Spaniard pacing up and down with

the red dot of a hot cigar to glow in the darkness as he flicked the ash over the rail.

Whitcomb had made no arrangement with me as to the details of the embarkation, but the old one-eyed sinner was waiting for us when the launch made its landing. His first word put a crimp in everything.

"Ther's the devil to pay and no pitch hot, I cal'late," he growled. "Spardoza's gone and put that feller Velasquez aboard the schooner to see to it that we don't get lost in the shuffle."

CHAPTER X.

AT THE HARBOR MOUTH.

At this startling announcement of Skipper Whitcomb's, Stirling took hold with a snap that showed how rapidly he was coming along on the road to complete recovery.

"Just one question, captain: Is there any way in which Spardoza could have found out that you are taking us as passengers?"

"No, I cal'late ther' ain't; not 'nless you two hev been talkin' too much."

"Then why has he put this man aboard at the last minute?"

"I dunno, 'nless he's to give me my sailin' orders. I ain't got any, 'ceptin' to foller the yacht. We're cleared for La Guayra, but that don't need to mean that we're goin' there."

"It's up to you," Stirling announced crisply. "We can't go aboard openly with two vessels within shouting distance of each other. Whatever you say we'll do."

In reply the skipper made a proposal that looked awfully risky to me—the risk being that we stood a fine chance of losing our passage money and our voyage at one and the same moment. Whitcomb protested that he couldn't get us aboard the schooner at the wharf without Velasquez's knowing it; whereupon the secretary would promptly communicate with his employer, and our cake would be dough.

To get around this difficulty, the skipper proposed that we go in our launch to the harbor mouth and wait until both vessels were under way. The yacht would be leading, and when the schooner came along we were to hail it and be picked up. It would then be too late for Velasquez to communicate with the yacht, and Whitcomb agreed to disoby any order to put us ashore that the secretary might give him.

As I say, it looked like taking a long chance. Whitcomb had already advertised himself as a crook, and he was sailing upon an errand which he had every reason to believe was crooked or criminal in some way. There was a stiff breeze springing up, and the schooner would probably pass out of the harbor mouth under full sail. Nothing would be easier than for its skipper to ignore a hail from our waiting motor boat.

I turned quickly upon Stirling. "You're the doctor," I said; and he prescribed at once.

"We'll be waiting for you," he rapped out at Whitcomb; "starboard side, in the shadow of the Morro. If you don't take us aboard when we hail, we'll take a crack at the man at the wheel. We don't want to have to hurt anybody, but a bargain's a bargain." And, knowing Whitcomb's weakness, I broke in to add: "If you don't like our terms, you can give us back our money."

Whitcomb made no motions toward his pocket, and he was shufflingly voluble in his protestations of good faith. But perhaps Stirling's threat had some weight with him, too.

Our boatman took his new orders, and the liberal tip that went with them, quite cheerfully, and ran us at half speed down the harbor and through the narrows to the point where it opens upon the Gulf. Here we lay off and on under the shadow of the high point crowned by the great fortress, staring across at the lights of the city, and growing more nervous and jumpy —or at least I was—as the critical moment drew near.

From our lurking place we could not see the yacht or the schooner; there was too much shipping intervening; so we knew that the crisis, when it did come,

would be upon us without warning. After what seemed to me the longest half hour I had ever known, Stirling borrowed my pocket flash light to turn it upon the face of his watch.

"Five minutes of nine," he announced in low tones. "You say it's flood tide at nine?"

"The almanac says so," I said.

"Then a few minutes more will tell the story," he rejoined, and the words were scarcely out of his mouth when the *Estrella,* bulking white and ghostly in the reflection of the city's lights, came into view.

The yacht was steaming at half speed, and she passed so close to us that her bow wave set the launch abob like a cork. I was hoping she wouldn't be followed too closely by the *Casco;* but the hope died almost as soon as it was born. While the stern light of the yacht was no more than a stone's throw distant, we saw the spread sails of the schooner looming against the background of harbor masts and funnels.

Stirling leaned over and said something to our boatswain, and I felt, rather than heard, the quickened drumming of our motor. Slowly, almost majestically, the clumsy sailing craft came on, rolling up a miniature billow upon her blunt bows. If Whitcomb were on the lookout for us, he made no sign; and when the schooner was within a hundred yards, Stirling reached for the pistol which he had made me get out of our portable arsenal while we were waiting. At the imminent risk of being heard on board the yacht, I shouted: "Schooner ahoy!" But still there was no sign or stir on the *Casco's* deck.

Again Stirling laid his commands upon the boatman, and our tiny launch edged up until it was almost directly under the schooner's bows. Since we were to windward, we had an unobstructed view of the decks. There were two men at the bow, and aft the figure of the man at the wheel was silhouetted distinctly against the white background of the mainsail. Stirling stood up and cocked his weapon. Properly speaking, I should have been scared stiff at the prospect of a bloody tragedy; but somehow the nervous fright didn't materialize. Instead, I groped for another weapon, thinking I might try my hand if Stirling should miss. It was all in harmony with the fantastic absurdities, and, as I have said, I was by this time as much of a treasure-mad lunatic as Stirling was.

Somebody—I suppose it was the skipper—forestalled our declaration of war at the critical instant. Just as we were about to be swept under the *Casco's* counter, a line was flung over the rail and our boatman caught it and made it fast. A moment later, our little craft was towing at the schooner's stern. The *Casco,* lightly laden, was riding high, and Whitcomb had to give us a hand to help us climb aboard. The transfer was made in silence, and with the same lack of words our dunnage came aboard at the end of the towing rope. The steersman, impassive as a block of marble, paid no attention to us; and Whitcomb, in a croaking whisper, bade us follow him below, where he thrust us unceremoniously into a box of a den with two rude bunks in it and a single port light for ventilation.

"That's the wust of it over and done with," he grumbled, when one of his men had followed us with the suit cases. And then: "The Cuban's up for'ard. I cal'late he didn't see you come aboard. It's you and him for it t'-morrow mornin' when he finds out you're here."

It was a sick man's bedtime, and Stirling was showing the effects of our adventurous beginnings all too plainly. So, after I had made him turn in and had seen him safely asleep, I groped my way to the deck, having a feeling that I should like to have it out with the smooth-faced secretary while the adventure was still young.

When I stuck my head out of the companionway, the *Casco* was fairly at sea, lumbering heavily over the swells, or smashing through them, as she happened to catch them going or coming. At first sight, the deck appeared de-

serted by all save the steersman, but an instant later I saw the glow of a cigar and marked my man down. He was leaning over the rail and looking out ahead to where the stern light of the *Estrella* showed up like a star on the near horizon.

I happened to be wearing shoes with rubber heels, and he did not hear me or know of my presence until I came up behind him and laid a hand—the heavy hand of a large man—firmly upon his shoulder. I didn't need any proof of his temper or his crookedness, but he gave it gratis in the way in which his right hand slid inside of his coat—feeling for a weapon, as I supposed.

"Señor Velasquez," I exclaimed, "this is certainly a pleasure! Is it really possible that you have turned your back upon Havana the gay?"

Heretofore I had found him glib enough in speech, but now he seemed too astounded to find any words. Finally he stammered out:

"Y-you, Señor Turley?"

It didn't seem worth while to mince matters with this hired tool of the greater villain, so I let him have it straight:

"Yes, it is I; and in the morning you shall meet my friend, the man whom you last night tried to murder by putting typhus germs in his drinking water. No, you needn't deny it; I saw you do it."

The night was only starlit, but it didn't require much light to show up the abject terror that leaped into the secretary's eyes as he staggered back against the rail. Oddly enough, one would say, his palpable fright gave me a twinge of uneasiness. A coward is always to be feared more than the most vindictive bully; at least, I have always found it so. When he found his tongue again, it was to say, in a hoarse whisper:

"What is it that you do aboard this ship which belongs to the Señor Spardoza?"

"What we are doing is none of your business," I told him curtly. "And, anyway, you're going to be too busy with your own affairs to trouble yourself much about ours. Of course, you know what's coming to you. At the first port we make, you'll be turned over to the proper authorities on a charge of attempted murder."

At that he began to beg like a dog, as I expected he would. He didn't deny the crime; I think he was convinced that I really had seen him commit it. And his ratlike mind was probably running over all the possibilities and dwelling upon the one great possibility that I might bribe the skipper to put us ashore somewhere where there would be a United States consul to take a hand in the criminal prosecution.

I let him run on for a little while before I laid down the law for him:

"There is just one way in which you can save yourself, Señor Velasquez. I don't know how much or how little you know about your employer's purpose on this voyage, and I don't care particularly; but I'll say this: you may have the run of the schooner so long as you don't try to communicate with the yacht. You'll be under surveillance, and the minute you are caught trying to make signals, down you go into the hold with a pair of irons on you."

"But the skeeper—Captain Wheetcomb, he will not permit of this!" he shrilled.

I took him by the lapel of his coat and shook him a little, just to let him see how it felt to be in the grip of a real man.

"You are at the greatest possible disadvantage just now, Señor Velasquez," I said. "As you are probably quite well aware, Captain Whitcomb owns nothing in this world that he wouldn't sell for a price, and in that field I imagine I could outbid you two to one. You can take your measures accordingly. If you behave yourself, we shall doubtless have a most pleasant voyage together; but if you forget, there will always be room for you in the hold—or over the side."

And at this I left him and went back to the noxious little kennel between decks, locked the door, and turned in to sleep the sleep of the righteous.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TORTURE CHAMBER.

I turned out in good season on the morning of our first day at sea, leaving Stirling still asleep in his bunk. The sun was just lifting above the watery waste when I went on deck. The good stiff breeze with which we had started was still with us, and the *Casco,* clumsy as she was, was thrashing over the swells like an overgrown porpoise.

Dead ahead, and at a distance of possibly a couple of miles, I saw the yacht. Our one-eyed skipper, grim and forbidding, was at the schooner's wheel, and I went aft to bid him good morning. He was as grumpy as a bear with a sore head, and I inferred that he had already fallen afoul of Mr. Martino Velasquez. Since there was no use in avoiding the subject, I jumped into it at once.

"I suppose Spardoza's hired man has been telling you all the things that are going to happen to you if you don't let him communicate with his boss, hasn't he?" I asked.

"Suthin' of that sort," was the growled-out admission. And then: "What in tunket did you want to go and rile things all up with him for?"

"It had to be done sooner or later," I replied; "and I thought perhaps I'd sleep better if I did it last night. Let me make things a little plainer, Whitcomb—and perhaps a little easier for you. This man you've got on board is no better than a murderer, and a hired murderer at that. Two nights ago I caught him trying to poison the friend who came aboard with me last night."

"Sho, now! You don't say!" And then, with the shrewdest of gleams in the single eye: "You cal'late you c'd prove that if so be ye had to?"

"I can."

For a time the old skipper swung to the wheel and said nothing, and if looks went for anything I could see that he was devoured with curiosity. At length he said: "Fust off it's lighthouses, and then it's a sick man, and now it's suthin' wuss. If you know, I wish to Jeshurun you'd tell me where this schooner's a-headin' for."

I laughed. "That's a pretty question for a skipper to ask of a passenger," I threw in. "Don't you know yet where you're going?"

"No more'n a goat—I told you that once before, and I'm sayin' it ag'in."

"But surely you have some sort of sailing orders."

He spat over the side. "Ya-as; I'm to foller that steamboat."

"And if you should happen to lose sight of her?"

"I ain't a-goin' to lose sight of her."

There was evidently nothing to be got out of the skipper, so I strolled away forward. There was a man at the bow, acting as lookout, and two more swabbing down the deck. All three were foreigners of some sort, Conchos or Minorcans by their looks, and I took it that they represented the watch on deck, which would leave perhaps three more men in a crew of six. Besides these I supposed there would be a mate, and the diver, though it was quite possible that Spardoza had taken the underwater man with him on the yacht.

We made a mixed quartet at the cabin breakfast table a little later, with the negro cook serving us. The skipper ate like a one-eyed ogre and said nothing, and Velasquez was just about as sociable as Whitcomb. As I sat there, making the best of the rather coarse fare, I was chuckling inside and wondering how the Cuban felt to be sitting at table with the man he had tried to murder. But perhaps little things like that don't trouble some people.

After breakfast I pulled Stirling off to a quiet corner of the deck, and, since the time was now ripening pretty rapidly, I told him a few of the things that I had been keeping from him, beginning with the auto accident which had put me in touch with the two young women and Spardoza, and winding up with the story of Velasquez's attempt upon his life, and the visit of one of the sisters to my rooms in the Hotel Sevilla.

He stood it all much better than I thought he would, and his comment was

made purely from the fatuous lover's point of view.

"Two years ago, Anson—yes, two months ago—I should have shouted if anybody had told me that love at first sight was anything more than a sentimental novelist's foolish notion; but now I know a lot better. Isn't it wonderful? And to think that she cared enough for me to try to help! Isn't she the most beautiful thing you ever saw, Anson?"

That wasn't quite the word I should have used. To my mind there is a womanly charm which transcends any mere beauty of face and figure. But "beautiful" is the lover's handy word, and I let it pass.

"She is everything you can say of her, Grant, and then some. I don't wonder that you want to get her out of that old land crab's claws, and I'll help you to do it, gold bars or no gold bars. I owe her that much for her goodness to me."

"You're sure she's on the yacht?" he asked.

"Reasonably sure. She told me that her guardian had ordered them both to get ready at once."

From that we fell into low-toned talk about the difficult situation which had developed, and which promised to develop still more. We had no plan, and could think of none; so far as we could see, we were absolutely at the mercy of chance. Velasquez's presence on board the *Casco* did not seem to trouble Stirling, but it troubled me good and plenty. I knew that if he didn't put a dose of strychnine in our coffee some fine morning it would be only because he didn't happen to have the strychnine.

While we were talking, Velasquez came on deck, lighting a black cigar. In the course of time he edged up forward and stood just behind the man on the lookout. It was easy to guess why he was staring out ahead at the *Estrella;* he was hammering his brain to try to pound out some way to get in touch with her. But the two-mile distance still held, and that was our safety.

The more we talked, Stirling and I, the farther we seemed to get away from anything like a plan which promised the remotest chance of success. If Whitcomb had had an American crew on the schooner, there would have been something to build on, since we were measurably sure now that we could bribe Whitcomb himself to break with Spardoza when the pinch came. But even with Whitcomb's purchased assistance we would be only three white men against whatever foreign crowd there might be on the *Estrella.*

"We can't plan much ahead," Stirling decided at the last. "When the time comes we shall have to fall back upon our wits and do a little man-sized thinking and plotting while the orchestra plays. There'll be a way out of it, and we'll find it when we are obliged to." And with that he left me and went below, to come up again presently with the pair of field glasses that I had bought in Havana the day before, and to level them over the schooner's rail at the vessel ahead; an occupation with which he filled the greater part of the day, trying, as I imagined, to get a sight of the one altogether lovely who might possibly be gazing out over the wake of the yacht at the *Casco* lumbering along behind.

As the day had begun, so it ended, with the Cuban shore a faint blue line to the southward and the yacht and the schooner holding steadily to the westward course. By nightfall we had familiarized ourselves sufficiently with our vessel and her crew, and Whitcomb had thawed out enough to say that since he didn't have the diver aboard, it followed, as a matter of course, that Spardoza must have him. I suppose we might have called this encouraging if we had had anything to tie to, since we had the diving apparatus on the schooner, without which nothing could be done at the wreck. But still the miraculous expedient which was to take the command of the expedition away from Señor José Maria Spardoza and give it to us refused to suggest itself.

On the second morning matters still remained *in statu quo,* except that during the night the *Estrella* had increased

her lead by possibly another mile, with the course changed to the southward. After breakfast I saw Whitcomb studying his chart and glancing up now and then at the barometer on the cabin bulkhead. He was a queer old duffer, as full of quirks and oddities as a nut is of meat. The cabin of the *Casco* exhibited some of the oddities. Though it was bare of furnishings to the edge of actual discomfort, the walls were covered with cases of stuffed birds, and there was a bookshelf that looked as if it might have been filled from the oldest junk shop in the business.

Apart from his grim eccentricities, the skipper was the hardest man to talk to I have ever known; it was like pulling teeth to get a word out of him. But he did answer my question about the weather. The glass was falling rapidly, he said, and we were probably in for a blow.

Stirling and I put our heads together on this information. In case we should have a spell of bad weather, it was altogether probable that the two vessels would lose sight of each other, in which event we should lose sight of the only clew which could possibly lead us to the fairy-tale island. Again Stirling and I went into solemn conclave in our crouching place under the lee of the sheltering deck house. Almost at once Stirling asked the vital question upon which all the other questions hung.

"Does Velasquez know the latitude and longitude of the island? Would Spardoza trust him with the figures?" he queried.

It will be understood that previous to this we had pumped Whitcomb quite dry of information. Before leaving Havana, Spardoza had told the skipper that Velasquez was going with him, and that in a case of emergency he was to take his orders from the secretary.

I think Stirling and I both saw what was before us if the two vessels should be blown apart. As I had known him in our joint youth, Stirling had been anything but cold-blooded; but now I saw a glint in his eye that boded ill for Velasquez in case it should be necessary for us to make him talk. But meanwhile this chance was only a chance. The schooner was still bowling along with all her canvas up, and it seemed hard to imagine that a storm was threatening.

By noon, however, the imagining part of it was a good bit easier. The wind was shifting into the northwest and was blowing a half gale, with the sea getting up to match. It was the skipper's watch below; and the mate, an ugly brute of a Minorcan, held on until Stirling and I both made sure we should lose our topsails, at least, before he gave the order to clew down and reef.

Under shortened sail, and with the gale increasing hourly, the *Casco* made heavy weather of it, light as her lading was. Her bows were so blunt that she hit the seas like a clumsy battering-ram, taking about as much water aboard as she turned aside. The *Estrella*, built on yachting lines, was behaving much better. In the glimpses we could catch of her she was forging steadily ahead on her course, neither increasing nor diminishing her lead, so far as we could see.

As the day waned, we made up our minds that we were booked for a rough night of it, and Stirling and I both turned in with our clothes on. Some time past midnight we were awakened by a tremendous thumping and pounding on deck. We tumbled out and crawled up the companion ladder. The wind seemed to have stopped blowing for the moment, but the pitching of the ship was something frightful.

We soon found out what the clamor meant. The spars of the sheer-pole derrick had been insecurely lashed; they had broken away, and were hammering everything breakable into pulp. I shoved Stirling back into the cabin, out of harm's way, and hastened to join Whitcomb and his men in the fight to capture the timber devils. For a time it looked as if the *Casco* were due to be mauled into a wreck in spite of fate. In addition to the two sticks of timber, the heavy hoisting crab had also broken loose and was slamming about over the deck like the crazy cannon in Victor Hugo's story. As we threw our-

selves first upon one and then another of the catapulting fiends, I found myself cursing Spardoza's club-headed mechanical notions in outfitting with a derrick big enough to lift a ship, when any little old temporary hoisting gear would serve the purpose at the galleon wreck.

I don't know how it was with the others, but for my part I had acquired a bruised arm, a black eye, and a perfect lather of perspiration by the time we had the animated deckload lashed down again. When I swung down the compaion ladder I found Stirling at the foot of it, humped up on the floor and swearing at himself because he wasn't yet able to take hold and do his bit with the rest of us. It wasn't worth while to reason with him, so I dragged him off to his bunk and made him go to bed again.

Velasquez had been invisible during the turmoil of the night, but in the morning we found him at his customary post in the bow of the schooner, getting himself well drenched with spray. During the latter part of the night the gale had sprung up again and the schooner was smashing along under double-reefed foresail and jib. At every plunge Velasquez came up dripping like a water rat, and grabbing for handholds, but he kept his place like a seasoned sailor.

A glance ahead from the crest of the next sea explained his actions, showed us what he was looking for—and couldn't find. The *Estrella* had disappeared.

"Now we'll see what we shall see," I told Stirling; and shortly after this, Whitcomb, who was steering, sent a man forward to capture Velasquez and bring him aft. There was a little talk between the skipper and the Cuban, at which we didn't butt in; but later on, after Velasquez had gone back to his stand in the bows, we cornered Whitcomb.

"How about it, captain?" I asked. "Have you got your sailing orders yet?"

Whitcomb shook his head. "The orders is to hold the course we hed las' night."

"And that is——"

"South and by east, two points east."

"Where are we now?"

"If I knowed, I'd feel a leetle mite sureder o' not pilin' this schooner up on some reef that ain't marked on the chart."

"But you took an observation yesterday," Stirling broke in.

"We was in the Yucatan Channel then, but that ain't sayin' nothin' about where this gale o' wind's yanked us to since yiste'day noon."

"One more question, captain," I said. "Does this man Velasquez know where we are going?"

"I dunno no more'n a buttin' he-goat. He says to keep on steerin' the course we had when we was follerin' the yacht. I shouldn't wonder if he's cal'latin' on her findin' us ag'in."

We, Stirling and I, let matters rock along until nightfall. By that time the wind had moderated enough so that we had shaken out the mainsail with two reefs in it. Still the horizons were blank so far as the yacht was concerned, and to a man up a tree it looked as if we had lost her for good and all.

After supper Stirling beckoned me into our boxlike stateroom and shut the door.

"Anson," he said smoothly, "it's up to us. I've been watching this fellow Velasquez all day, and it's a cinch that he knows the latitude and longitude of our island. If you and I were not aboard, he would have given the figures to Whitcomb this morning. Have you got your nerve with you?"

I said I had, or I thought I had. We were a long way from the place where Turley Plows are made, and I was beginning to feel as if I had stepped back into the century in which the black flag was the one oftenest seen on the heaving seas over which the old *Casco* was lumbering.

"Here is the layout," Stirling went on: "Spardoza will assume that his lieutenant has given Whitcomb his directions; and now that he has lost us, he will steam straight for the island,

confidently expecting that Velasquez and Whitcomb will bring the schooner there. We don't know how much or how little Velasquez knows about me, but we do know that he is in the secret far enough to be sure that I constitute some sort of a menace to his boss. For that reason he is marking time and keeping his mouth shut."

"Well?" I said.

"It's up to us to make that sleek-faced beggar talk, Anson."

It looked that way to me, too, but I didn't see how it was going to be done. When a man won't talk, he won't talk, and that's all there is to it—in the twentieth century.

"That's what made me ask you if you had your nerve with you," Stirling continued, after a thoughtful little pause. "Are you game to go and capture Velasquez and bring him here? I'd do it myself if I were fit to manhandle him."

"You're meaning to give him the third degree?" I asked; and if I looked as pale as I felt, the ghost of the oldest Turley that ever was had nothing on me.

Stirling nodded. "Something of that sort," he said, as coolly as if he were ordering a dish of eggs fried on one side.

I went out to do the deputy-sheriff act with my breath coming rather thickly and my knees knocking together. Don't misunderstand me; I wasn't afraid of the man, but I was scared blue at the thought of what we might have to do to him if he should hold out stubbornly and refuse to tell us what we were obliged to know.

I found Velasquez at his usual post in the bow, standing just behind the man who was acting as lookout, though the night was thick and he couldn't have hoped to see the *Estrella* even if she had been within hailing distance. He was smoking one of the black cigars, but it dropped from his fingers and was blown overboard when I laid a hand on his shoulder.

"You're wanted," I said shortly. "Come along down to the cabin with me."

As on that first night, when I had told him where he stood, I saw the quick movement of his right hand toward an inside vest pocket. This time it wasn't checked, and before I could grab him he had flashed a wicked-looking knife and made a slash at me. I saw the glint of the blade just in time to clamp his wrist—and after that I had fewer scruples. A twist of the clamped wrist made him drop the knife, and I picked it up and tossed it over the rail.

"That will be enough for this time," I told him; and then I yanked him out of his place and felt him over to see if he had any more weapons. There was a gun in his hip pocket, and when I had taken it, I marched him ahead of me to the companionway, down the ladder, and into the boxlike den where Stirling was waiting, lounging in his berth and reading, or making believe to read, one of the musty old books from the skipper's cabin shelf.

The den was fit for a torture chamber; a grim cell of a place, lighted by a smoky hanging lamp, and utterly bare of furnishings save the two bunks and a single three-legged stool. I gave the captive a shove toward the stool and he sat down involuntarily. Stirling was still haggard from the effects of his sickness, and his grin when he glanced up from his book showed his teeth and made him look as ferocious as I supposed he might be feeling just about that time. His attack upon the Cuban was as direct as a shot out of a gun.

"Before you left Havana, Señor Velasquez, the Señor Spardoza gave you some figures of latitude and longitude which you were to pass on to Captain Whitcomb in case the two vessels lost sight of each other," he said crisply. "If you wish to live to see another sunrise, you will give us those figures here and now."

CHAPTER XII.

"THE SAINTS' EVERLASTING REST."

For an instant the dark face of the man on the three-legged stool blanched to a sort of sickly yellow. Then an

exultant light flashed into his black eyes as he realized that we did not know the location of the island—that, however temerariously, he held the key to the situation in his own hands.

"You are ver' much meestaken," he asserted craftily. "I am to tell the skeeper to 'old the course; I so tell heem this morning."

"That won't do," Stirling cut in brusquely. "You know, and you've got to tell. I have my warrant for anything I choose to do to you; you gave it to me when you loaded my drinking water with typhus germs the other night in the Havana hospital."

There was a quality in Stirling's tone that got inside of the man's shell, and again the yellow pallor came into his face.

"You would-a—keel me?" he gasped.

"Just that," said Stirling, as cold as ice. "Or, rather, we'll make you so impatient to be dead and comfortably out of it that you'll wish you'd never been born."

Velasquez opened his mouth and let out a series of yells that were fairly bloodcurdling. Stirling let him alone until he stopped for breath, and then he said: "You may shout all you want to; there isn't any help for you on board this hooker. The skipper knows what you tried to do to me, and he won't interfere. Are you ready to tell us what we want to know?"

With the return of some portion of his lung power the secretary became shrilly and passionately eloquent. He was not in his employer's confidence; he did not know the destination of the yacht or the schooner; it was useless for us to expect him to tell when he couldn't. I've often wondered how the old inquisitors could steel their hearts against the pleadings of some poor wretch under torture. But as Velasquez's frenzied plea went on, lapsing now and again into his native tongue when the broken English wouldn't come fast enough, I understood a little how the very abjectness of the victim might have the exact opposite to its intended effect. At the end of it I found that I was only waiting for Stirling's word to put my hands upon this groveling wretch.

The last call came when the Cuban had run the gamut of all the beggings for mercy.

"Once more, Velasquez, and it's the last time: Will you tell us what we want to know?" Stirling demanded.

I don't know—I shall never know—why this man clung so desperately to his loyalty to a master who was so little worthy of it. But Stirling's final warning merely served to start the torrent of protest afresh. Stirling gave me the word. "Tie him," he said shortly.

I'm not sure that I could have done it in cold blood; but Velasquez saved me the trouble of finding out. Before I could make a move he had leaped from the stool to fling himself upon me like a wild cat, all claws to scratch and teeth to bite. Of course it didn't amount to anything; I had fifty or sixty pounds the better of him in the matter of weight. But by the time I had got him wound up in one of the bunk blankets and tied like a mummy, I was warm enough to go on with the little comedy, or tragedy, or whatever it was going to be, to the end.

Instead of giving the next order, Stirling picked up the book he had been reading and turned to me.

"The skipper's taste in literature seems to be fully as gruesome as everything else about him," he remarked, as casually as if we had just been discussing Whitcomb's eccentricities. "This old book, for example, 'The Tortures of All Nations;' I've been looking it over to see if I couldn't find something to fit this beggar's case."

I couldn't guess for the life of me what he was driving at, but the effect of this preliminary remark upon the mummy was visible in the staring eyes and the starting of a fresh burst of sweat on the yellow forehead.

"Of course, we have none of the appliances, racks, thumbscrews, boots, and things of that sort," Stirling went on evenly. "So we'll have to fall back upon the methods of the primitive peoples. Some of the savages were pretty

ingenious; pressure upon the eyeballs was the method of one of the Central African tribes; and another found that the nerve under the elbow, if persistently bruised, would produce the keenest torture. Then there's the water cure of the Filipinos—only it would be too bad to waste fresh water on shipboard."

By this time I was beginning to get a faint glimmering of Stirling's purpose, and I fell into line.

"Surely you've been able to find something better than those," I put in.

"Oh, yes; there are plenty of things for which no special machinery is needed. You can tie a handkerchief tightly about a man's ears and tap on it gently with your finger. It doesn't hurt at first, but in a little time it will excite the most exquisite pain. But we have to hand the palm to the ancient Japs for the method which leaves no visible mark, and yet produces the most astonishing results. There is a certain nerve in the back of the neck and a little to one side, and the pressure of a thumb upon it does the business. The sensation is that of the thrusting of a million hot needles into every part of the body, and it is said that five minutes of it will drive the strongest man mad—and incidentally make a cripple of him for life. I think we'll try this, if you can manage to find the particular nerve."

I didn't have to try it. By this time the poor victim's eyes were starting from their sockets and he was foaming at the mouth.

"No—no—no!" he shrieked. "I tell —I tell!" And then he gave up the precious secret. In one of his grips, hidden away between the lining and the bottom, there was a paper with some figures written on it.

"Leave him as he is, and go and get the grip," said Stirling, still as cool and collected as a judge on the bench.

Crossing the cabin to a little den on the port side similar to ours, I rummaged in the dark under the lower bunk. There were two grips, a suit case and a hand bag, and I brought them both. The mummified man was perspiring as if he had been in a sweat bath, and his eyes had not yet gone back into place. At his gasped-out direction I dumped out the contents of the hand bag upon the floor. The lining seemed to be whole and intact, so I tore it out. Pasted carefully in between the leather and the fiber bottom there was a small slip of paper on which was written, in a scrawly Spanish hand: "Long. 83°, 7′; Lat. 18°, 32′."

I handed the slip to Stirling, and for the first time he showed a little of the strain he was under. "I knew we'd get it!" he shouted, and then he laughed boisterously. "To think that the crafty old buccaneer should fall over his own feet this way!"

After I had crammed the things back into the ravished hand bag, I unbound Velasquez and turned him loose. He was in a black mood while he sat on the edge of the bunk to recover himself, and if hard words could have killed there would have been a double burial at sea for the two Americanos who had gotten the better of him.

"You will make nutting!" he shrilled, with a queer whistle in his throat, as he got up to lurch through the open door, carrying his dunnage. "And for these insult to me you shall be keel!"

After the Cuban had gone, I took up the battered old book out of which the Velasquez imagination had been worked upon; took it up, opened it, and roared. "The Tortures of All Nations" proved to be nothing more alarming than a well-thumbed copy of "Baxter's Saints' Rest." Stirling grinned appreciatively at my shout of laughter.

"All you ever need is the proper stage setting," he chuckled. "A man's imagination will do all the rest. And we knew beforehand that this particular man had the yellow streak. Any poisoner must have."

Now that we had the vitally needful figures of latitude and longitude, we took counsel together, and did it in a hurry. As the upshot of our brief conference, I went on deck and found the one-eyed skipper at the wheel. Since I had already learned that there was no use in being mealy-mouthed with him I began in the middle of things.

"Whitcomb, how much is Spardoza paying you for this trip?" I asked abruptly.

He let the schooner make two long plunges over the heaving seas before he named the amount.

"It's a clean, clear-cut robbery—this voyage you've been hired for," was my next shot. "But I'm not going to appeal to your honesty. How much will you take to throw up the job and hire yourself out over again to Mr. Stirling and me?"

It wasn't in him to answer a direct question straight, as I had long since discovered.

"I cal'late I'd hev to know what *your* job is fust," he returned, and spat into the sea.

"It is neither more nor less than the job Spardoza gave you: to sail this hooker to a certain island in the Caribbean, and to stand by while we tackle a small piece of salvage."

The skipper turned his one eye upon me, and his toothless grin, seen in the upshining light from the binnacle lamp, was enough to make one's flesh crawl.

"So that's the how of it, is it?" he drawled. "'Nother Cap'n Kidd's chest, eh?" And then he laughed—the most sardonic laugh I had ever heard come out of the mouth of a man.

"You don't believe it?" I said. "That's all right; perhaps I don't, either. But Stirling does, and so does Spardoza. All we are asking you to do is stand by us as you were intending to stand by the old sugar planter. The treasure, if there is any, belongs to Stirling by all the laws of finders and keepers. He was sick and he gave the secret away to Spardoza."

Again the skipper spat at a passing sea.

"I ain't no fightin' man," he objected, adding: "And I don't know the way to your condummed island."

"We know the way now," I threw in. "Let us come to the point, which is merely a question of dollars and cents. How much do you want?"

Once more he let me see the horrible, one-eyed grin. "What was you doin' to the Cuban feller down below? I heard him screechin'."

"We were making him tell us what he was put here to tell you—what he didn't dare tell you because *we* are here. When you name your price, I'll give you the latitude and longitude of the island."

"That ain't all there is to it. What you git you'll hev to fight for. Spardoza's got three men to our one on the yacht, and plenty of guns and the like; I seed 'em goin' aboard in Havana. Now that we're lost out, he'll beat us to the island, and you fellers won't get a smell."

I saw that the time had come to clinch the bargain. I had taken the precaution to have a couple of drafts turned into American gold before leaving Havana, and I promptly named double the sum that Whitcomb had received from Spardoza.

"Mebbe you'll never git back alive to pay it," he began; but I killed that objection by saying that I would pay it at once in American gold.

The baleful eye was averted when he said: "You got that much money with you?"

In the winking of an eye I saw all the chances we were taking. This old scoundrel had us completely at his mercy, and if he wished to drop us overboard some dark night, no one would ever be the wiser, since we had left absolutely no trail behind us by which we might have been traced. And in admitting that we had money with us, I had virtually put a premium upon the overboard business. If there had been a single American in the *Casco's* crew it would have been different—but there wasn't.

He hesitated so long that I could imagine him cooking up all sorts of plots to rob and murder us; or perhaps weighing in his mind the certain fixed amount to be made by robbing us against the chance of a possible greater gain by going through with the adventure. But in the end he merely dickered a little more.

"You ain't got no chance in the wide world agin' Spardoza. But if the Lord

doos happen to be on your side, and there *is* any Cap'n Kidd chist, how much do I git out of it?"

"That depends entirely upon how loyally you stand by us, Whitcomb," I said promptly—which was a bit of raw bluff, since he had everything in his own hands and could do precisely as he pleased with us, and with the treasure as well, if there were any. There was another long pause, but at the end of it the root of all evil got in its work.

"Git your money, and gimme my orders," he said crabbedly.

But after the gold had been paid over and the sailing directions given, I felt as every other briber has felt since the world began—that it was merely a matter of temerarious chance as to whether or not the man bought would stay bought—a game in which the briber necessarily stacks all the winning cards against himself.

CHAPTER XIII.

"LAND, O!"

The next morning the wind was blowing half a gale again, but the direction had changed so that we had it fairly abeam, which was the *Casco's* best sailing point. A glance at the compass didn't show that the course had been changed much, and the only evidence that Whitcomb was keeping faith with us lay in the fact that he had piled on the canvas until it was threatening to take the sticks out of the schooner.

The skipper knew as well as we did that our only chance lay in making the island ahead of the *Estrella,* though this chance seemed small enough, in pitting a slow windjammer against a steamer. The day was a long stretch of acute suspense. As before, Velasquez kept his place in the bows, straining his eyes, we supposed, for a sight of the smoke smudge which would mean our defeat and his deliverance.

At least three more of us were keeping a sharp lookout ahead, too, and late in the afternoon Whitcomb broke the ominous silence of the long day by pointing to the southward from his place at the rail and saying: "I cal'late mebbe that's your island."

We had it abreast of us by sunset: a low, sandy dot on the bald expanse of waters, with its thick forest of palms and its encircling reef. The half gale had blown itself out, but the storm-tossed sea remained to thunder upon the coral barrier. Stirling took his place beside Whitcomb.

"The passage through the reef is on the other side," he said, and Whitcomb altered the course accordingly.

"Are you sure this is the right island?" I asked, as Whitcomb eased the schooner off to give the reef a wide berth.

"I ought to be," was Stirling's low-toned reply. "If I should live to be a hundred, I believe I could close my eyes and see every detail of it." And then: "You see that point just ahead, where the spray dashes highest over the reef? That's where the *Santa Maria* struck, and the beach just beyond is where I found myself the next morning."

I knew that he was merely talking against time. The palms were thick in the center of the island, and they were high enough to hide whatever might be upon the opposite side. There were four of us on the *Casco* who were more than half expecting to weather the western jaggedness of the reef only to see the *Estrella* lying quietly at anchor in the southern lagoon.

In a little time the suspense grew nerve-racking. Never since the voyage had begun had the blunt-bowed *Casco* seemed to cover less space in her wallowings. Velasquez was at the rail amidships, and we couldn't see his face. But his attitude was eloquent of all the conflicting emotions.

Slowly the schooner crept along, with the wind dropping more and more at every flapping of the great sails. As we doubled the western reef, the men hauled at the sheets, and it was only by glancing at the compass that we could tell that our course was changing. Like the shifting of a scene in a theater, the dark palm-tree screen slipped aside and we found ourselves staring west-

ward into the vanishing afterglow of the sunset. The southern lagoon was empty!

I could read the fierce triumph in Stirling's eyes at the discovery, but his voice was perfectly steady when he spoke to Whitcomb.

"The passage is about midway of the southern reef," he said. "It is deep, but not very wide. Can you take her through with this wind?"

Whitcomb nodded, and again the schooner came about in obedience to the helm. Fortunately we were on the leeward side of the island, and the seas were less threatening.

Stirling pointed out the gap in the reef, a narrow rift through which the backlashing billows lurched without breaking to spend their force in the quiet waters of the lagoon. Whatever else we might say of him, the one-eyed skipper proved to be a past master in the art of handling our clumsy vessel. At the critical moment, when it seemed that the next surge must inevitably fling us upon the western reef, he jammed the helm hard down and the *Casco* slipped between the white-fanged jaws to lose her headway under the shelter of the wind-breaking palms.

As soon as the anchor was down, we held a conference around the cabin table—the skipper, Stirling, and I—with the door fastened and Velasquez safely marooned on deck. Whitcomb was taken into our confidence to the extent made necessary by the exigencies of the case. I could see that he was still sardonically incredulous about the existence of the drowned treasure, but he did not rub that part of it in too pointedly.

"Don't see as you're much nearder to it than you was afore," was his comment, after Stirling had described the position of the wreck, its depth, and so forth. "We're here, and Spardoza ain't here—but that ain't sayin' that he won't be afore we can jump up and knock our heels twice t'gether. He's got a Cuban sailin' master aboard the yacht, and I know the breed; he's turned tail and run afore the gale—which might cost him a day 'r two's time, more 'r less."

This was merely emphasizing a condition which was already sufficiently obvious. What we might do must be done swiftly if we hoped to avoid a collision with the old sugar planter. It went without saying that he would fight us for the treasure if he should reach the island in time to catch us at the work of salvage. And there was an obstacle that appeared at first sight insuperable: We had the diving apparatus, but no diver.

Stirling jumped into that breach like a man—or, at least, he tried to. But I wouldn't listen to him.

"You forget that you're just out of bed," I interposed. "No treasure that ever lay in the bottom of the sea is worth the risk you'd take. And, besides, you admit that you've had no experience."

Next we canvassed the scanty crew of the schooner through Whitcomb, but he chopped that hawser off close up to the bitts. He knew his crew, and there was no man in it with either the experience or the nerve to go down in shark-infested waters—to say nothing of their utter ignorance of diving armor.

The more we talked the farther we got away from any solution of the biggest of the problems, and until it should be solved we were just as bad off as we should have been if we had never left Havana. Inch by inch I saw the horrid thing creeping up upon *me*. It would be sheer murder for me to let Stirling tackle the underwater work in his half-convalescent condition, and the one-eyed skipper made no generous offer to sacrifice himself in the good cause—for which I didn't blame him. It was up to me, with only one "if" in the way, so far as I could see, and I wondered what the directors of the Turley Plow Company would think if they could hear their president calmly discussing it.

"If the rubber things are only big enough for me to get into——" I began, but Stirling broke in mandatorily:

"Never in the world, Anson! Not

if the whole Stirling tribe were starving and this was the only chance to get them something to eat! There's a limit to the length any man ought to let his friend go for him, and you've touched it!"

His protest put me upon my mettle. To go through so much and come so far only to fail for the lack of a bit of nerve at the last was not to be thought of. We argued over it hotly for a time, while Whitcomb sat back and grinned diabolically. In the end the argument proved that my solution of the problem was practically the only one there was. The diver—any diver—is dependent for his life upon the skill and mechanical knowledge of somebody above in charge of the air pump and the hoist, and Stirling was the only man aboard who knew anything about the mechanical part of it; his experience as a bridge engineer having given him the necessary knowledge.

To cut a long story short, Whitcomb had a couple of his men dig out the diving armor and bring it to the cabin, so that we might determine the question of size. Luckily the man to whom it belonged was no weakling; yet the rubber suit was a good tight fit for me, even when I was stripped to my underclothing; and the copper helmet had to be turned sidewise to get it over my head.

If I should live a thousand years I shall never forget the sensations of the first few minutes after that copper pot was slipped on over my head. My imagination supplied all the missing details: the suffocating pressure of the water, the bubbling of the air through the supply pipe, the horrible dread which oppresses any living creature taken forcibly out of its native element.

I guess I was looking a little pasty about the gills when the helmet was taken off, for Stirling immediately renewed his protestations, saying that whatever came of the adventure he was not going to allow me to go down. But with the removal of the stifling thing I got my courage back—the courage that a man has when he knows that he is not to be called on immediately to do the thing he is afraid of—and insisted that I would go down; that I wanted to go down, if only for the novelty of the thing.

That was the way we left it when the conference finally broke up. Since time was the one thing that neither love nor money could purchase, Whitcomb catted his anchor and warped the *Casco*, under Stirling's directions, to a new anchorage near the old wreck. Then Stirling and I overhauled the mechanical part of the diving apparatus together, adjusting the pumps by the light of a lantern; and while we were doing this, Whitcomb and his crew set up the sheer-pole derrick and rigged the hoist; all this so that there should be no wasting of the priceless daylight hours when the dawn should come.

Before these activities began, Velasquez had been marched down to his small cabin on the port side and locked in. We still doubted if Spardoza had told him anything about the treasure, and, anyhow, it was safer to have him out of the way.

It was long after midnight when Stirling and I turned in, leaving the skipper on watch. To utilize every moment of working time, we were to be called before daylight, and it was crucially needful that we should have what rest we could get in the interval. Stirling, with the healthy, convalescent craving for sleep, was soon off; but for an hour or more I lay tossing and rolling on my hard bunk, picturing over again all the probable horrors of the job I had undertaken; picturing also the deadly blight that would fall upon us if we should turn out in the morning only to find the *Estrella* anchored beside us in the lagoon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SHUDDERING DEPTHS.

The black cook came to rout us out in the morning while it was yet dark as a pocket, and after a hasty breakfast, eaten under the evil-smelling swinging lamp in the cabin, we went on deck.

In the waist of the schooner the one-eyed skipper was pacing back and forth,

waiting for light enough to enable him to see the horizon. It was a partial relief to find that the *Estrella* had not come up in the night, though the suspense, of which we had had so much, strung itself up taut again when we thought of what the approaching dawn might reveal.

Together the three of us watched the darkness pale in the east. Slowly the range of vision widened until finally the dawn broke and we could command the semicircle of horizon visible from our side of the island. Stirling's softly breathed oath when the watery waste gave no sign of ship or smoke plume was no profanity; it was more like a fervent prayer of thanksgiving.

"You have sent a man to the other side of the island to keep a lookout?" I inquired of Whitcomb, and the skipper nodded.

"How much time can we count on after the yacht is sighted?" Stirling asked.

"Not enough to amount to anything gre't," was the comfortless reply; "half an hour 'r so, mebbe."

As the moment approached when I must prepare to walk the plank, I felt a good bit as I fancy the condemned criminal feels while he is waiting for the sheriff on the morning of his execution. Thanks to the success of Turley Plows, I didn't have Stirling's need for money, so that spur was lacking. On the other hand, I got a fresh grip on myself now and then when I thought of all the good things I was going to fish out of the shuddering depths for the little brown-eyed darling who would share them with Stirling. Some day, after both she and I were old and decrepit, I promised myself that I should tell her how this thought had nerved me to go down into the shark-ridden waters, when nothing else would.

But this alleviating thought came only at intervals. The one large urgency was the feeling that I ought to be telling Stirling all the things he was to do for me in case I should go down into the old wreck and fail to come up again; business matters that would go to the dogs if I should suddenly drop out and leave no bubbles to mark the spot. Ridiculous as it may seem for a staid business man to confess, a silly rhyme from "Through the Looking-glass" kept running in my head:

> "The time has come," the Walrus said,
> "To talk of many things:
> Of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—
> Of cabbages—and kings——"

And yet to save my life I couldn't talk.

A little later, the preparations were made, much as they might have been made for a funeral; that is, in sober silence and with an air of finality that was anything but cheerful. At the very last, after the diver's ladder had been lowered over the side and lashed in place, and I had stared for a full minute down at the ghostly, black timbering of the old wreck that looked so near and yet so far away, Stirling tried once more to head me off.

"It is simply suicide for you, or any inexperienced man, Anson!" he protested warmly. "Diving is a trade by itself, and it has to be learned a little at a time. Give it up, and we'll let Spardoza come and do the fishing, trusting to luck to outwit him in some other way after the job has been done by somebody who knows how to do it."

"Not in a thousand years!" I answered, as gayly as any man who was waiting to hear the click of the gallows trap. "My pride wouldn't let me back out now."

When this was said I had already donned the rubber suit, likewise the leaden-soled shoes, which last-named decorations were nailing me to the deck, as fast as if I had grown there. Stirling gave me a shoulder to keep me from tipping over, while Whitcomb capped me with the copper pot and began to screw up the gasketed joint which makes the helmet one piece with the armor.

At the turning of the fatal thumbscrews I became as one dead to the pleasant world of the living. Looking out through the plate-glass goggle eyes of the headpiece, I could see two of the sailors beginning their monotonous grind at the cranks of the air pumps, and the thought came smashing in upon

me that if those slowly turning cranks should pause for a single moment—if an inconsequent toggle pin should fall out or a nut become loosened, or if one of the men should stop to spit on his hands—it would be all over with me.

That thought choked off by the knowledge that Stirling would be watching the air gauge and the machinery every instant, another comforting little notion bobbed up. What if Velasquez should pick the lock on his cabin door and make his escape to rush on deck and cut my air hose? If the Cuban had only known it, he was squaring up bravely with me for my share in what had been done to him two nights earlier. I shouted frantically to Stirling to look out for Velasquez, but the copper pot turned my voice into a thunder roar to deafen me, and I couldn't tell whether or not I had made anybody else hear.

They had rigged the hoisting fall to lift me and my leaden makeweights over the rail, and now I could feel Stirling or somebody knotting the sling under my arms. At this I shouted again, begging them to be careful and not get the air hose fouled with the tackle. While my ears were still crackling from the noise of the shout, or from the increasing air pressure, I saw the schooner's deck sinking away from me and knew that they were windlassing me over the side. After I had been lowered, and the rungs of the ladder had been put into my hands much as if I had been a blind man, Stirling gave me a palpitating shock by reaching down and thrusting one of the cook's galley knives into the belt of my clumsy uniform. For just one second through the clouded helmet glass, I mistook him for Velasquez leaning over to stab me.

With the hoist tackle to steady me, I felt my way cautiously down the perpendicular ladder. Slowly the gripping water crept up—to my knees, to my waist, to my armpits. One more step and I was gone, with the swirling, sunlit flood turning everything to a flickering golden yellow before my artificial eyes. I don't know how long the ladder was, or how deep I had to go, but if anybody should assert that it was a mile down to the yellow sands of the lagoon bottom, I am sure I should not dispute it. Stirling had cautioned me not to go down too fast on account of the increasing pressure, and I certainly obeyed him to the letter.

None the less, all things have an end, and in the course of time I found myself standing on the hard bottom, with the shadow of the schooner almost directly over me to make a huge, misshapen blot on the yellow footing. As luck or the placing of the *Casco* would have it, I had landed squarely upon the sand-filled hulk of the wreck, somewhere about amidships. At a little distance I could see dimly the time-blackened timber skeleton of the raised-cabin construction that Stirling had described. Half floating, half waddling, I made my way toward the goal, gripping my life line as if I were afraid it might come alive and get away from me, and striving gaspingly to become accustomed to the process of taking one breath at a time and trusting a kind and merciful Providence to provide the next when it should be due. The swirling of the water stirred by my progress through it made everything distorted and indistinct, and the skeleton timbers toward which I was moving took on all sorts of ghostly and undulating shapes, but I didn't mind that so much as I did its tendency to tip me over and to destroy all sense of equilibrium.

Reaching the framework forest, I got down upon hands and knees and crawled into its mazes, as Stirling said he had done. I know now that this was recklessly hazardous, but at the time I had the hardihood of utter ignorance. For one thing, I let go of the life line, which was fastened to my belt, and for another I paid no attention to the trailing hose which was supplying me with breath. The first intimation I had that anything was wrong came with a sudden stifling sensation. Instantly I knew that the air pipe had become fouled in some way, and that I should be dead very presently if I couldn't succeed in clearing it.

I hope I may never again have to live through an agony like that of the next sixty seconds or so—which seemed like sixty hours to me. The only thing to be done was to grope for the hose and trace it back to the foul. Half dead as I was, I chuckled foolishly when I found that the throttled air line was under me, and that I had been kneeling upon it.

With the life-giving air coming steadily again, I went on with the salvage job. At one side of the space which, as I supposed, had been the galleon commander's cabin, were the remains of the chest which Stirling had described. There was nothing left of the corroded brass bindings he had spoken of, and, with the exception of a slight covering of freshly drifted sand, the bars of dull-colored gold—bars the very existence of which I had been gravely doubting up to this moment—were lying heaped as he had left them.

By this time I was becoming a little more used to the strange surroundings, though the half-suffocating pressure of the water was still distressingly unnerving. Working as swiftly as the impeding water would permit, I dragged the ingots one at a time from their centuries-old resting place and piled them in the open space near the foot of my ladder, where the hoist would not foul in raising them. There were forty-three of them in all; at a rough estimate, something more than a ton of the precious metal. If we should live to get away with it, Stirling would be safely a millionaire, and more.

I had been assured that all hands on the *Casco* would keep a sharp lookout for sharks while I was down, but the assurance did not keep the cold chills from running up and down my back every time some curious and grotesque-shaped tropical fish came gliding up to stare at me through the helmet glasses. The hoisting of the bars to the schooner's deck was a slow process. I could send up only three or four at a time in the sling, and in the intervals while I was waiting for the tackle to come down again I had too much time to think. We had arranged only a crude system of signals by means of the life line, and I could not tell what was going on above save that my helpers were rushing their part of the job as though their lives depended upon the hurry. I could determine so much by the way in which they were working the hoisting tackle. What was the reason for the all-compelling haste? Had the *Estrella* been sighted at last?

Of course, in those brief waiting interludes, I couldn't forget Stirling's shark story for a single instant. At every fresh darkening of the water before my goggles, a thing which happened every time a larger fish than usual fanned its way across my line of vision, I imagined my time had come. It was this twittering of the fear nerve as much as anything, I guess, that made the artificial atmosphere I was breathing grow more and more oppressive. But the pile of bars was diminishing rapidly. If I could only hold out until the last load was hoisted!

It was while I was stacking the last of the ingots into the hoist sling that a curious hallucination came to make me wonder if I were seeing double. I had been careful to keep the slack of the air hose behind me as I worked; but now I saw it, or thought I saw it, floating around, phantomlike, among the timbers of the old cabin superstructure, and was immediately seized with a chilling fear that it might become entangled.

With the final load on its way to the surface, I waded toward the stern of the wreck to free the air line. To my astonishment, I found that I had been mistaken; the hose, clear of entanglements, was trailing safely behind me. Yet I could have sworn that I had seen it, only a moment before, waving itself like a clumsy black snake in the maze of the cabin framing.

The hallucination dispelled, I was about to climb the ladder in response to Stirling's, or somebody's, anxious twitchings at the life line, when I suddenly remembered the single ingot that Stirling said he had gotten out of the wreck and had dropped somewhere beyond the obstructing timbers. With the biggest part of the salvage job safely

done, it seemed weak and foolish not to finish it. I had not been down long, as a diver's shifts go, and, though my lungs were laboring and there was a painful roaring in my ears, I thought I was still good for the one small, final effort which would round the job out and make the tally complete.

So determining, I caught at the sling which had been lowered to help me ascend, and, disregarding the anxious jerkings at the signal line, wallowed my way around the stern of the old galleon. Strange as it may seem, I found the missing ingot almost at once. It was lying half buried in the sand, and I knelt to dig it out. Suddenly and without warning a premonition of danger froze the blood in my veins and a frantic impatience seized me; a perfectly frenzied eagerness to see the sun and the good old upper world again.

While I dug away at the half-buried gold bar, I was fighting desperately with the blind impulse which was prompting me to fasten the sling around my body and give those above the signal to hoist away. It seemed as if I couldn't wait to get back to the ladder; that I must be hauled up instantly or die. Naturally, as a man who had smashed his way to some sort of a business success by sheer persistence and dogged obstinacy, I pushed the impulse aside, toggled the last remaining treasure ingot into the sling, and gave the signal to lift it.

The fatal chunk of metal, weaving slowly in the water at the end of its hoist, had just passed out of my range of vision when the singular hallucination of the wandering air hose came again to wave back and forth in the amber-colored dimnesses before my staring eyes. It was entirely by instinct that I felt for the handle of the cook's knife which Stirling had thrust into my belt, but the instinctive drawing of the weapon most probably saved my life. For at that instant the waving phantom shot toward me and laid itself across one of the helmet glasses, and I saw that it was a clammy, suction-disked tentacle of the giant squid—the devilfish of the tropical seas.

CHAPTER XV.

A MISSING MAN.

The impulse that made me slash wildly with the cook's knife at the tentacle which was trying to wrap itself around my headpiece was purely mechanical, but the cut of the knife which severed the snaky thing freed me for the moment, and I wallowed backward in a desperate effort to get out of reach. Everything I had ever read about the terrible octopus flashed into my mind like lightning: its eight long arms to wrap themselves about its prey like so many boa constrictors; its beaklike head and staring eyes; the utter helplessness of any living thing that came within reach of the grappling tentacles.

Momently expecting to feel the clammy arms coiling themselves about me, I continued to back away, fumbling blindly for my signal line and trying as best I could to keep the trailing air hose out of the beast's reach. If I had only retained my hold upon the hoisting tackle—but I hadn't, and now I could not rise until I should reach the ladder.

Happily for my reason, which was threatening to go by the board and leave me a gibbering maniac, another actor came upon the scene. Just as I had made out through the dimmed glasses the shapeless mass of the great squid floating up toward me with its tentacles outspread like the legs of a gigantic spider, a dark shadow darted between, and a violent agitation of the under depths made me lose my balance and tumble over backward. At the upsetting instant I had a glimpse of the white under body of an enormous shark—a fleeting glimpse only, since a moment later the golden-amber medium into which I was staring turned inky black and I knew that the shark and the squid had closed in a death grapple. My slash with the knife had done the business. It was the severed tentacle which had attracted the squid's ablest enemy.

I don't know in what manner I contrived to fight my way blindly through the blackened sea to the foot of the

ladder, and I am sure that it was only by the kindly intervention of my good angel that I didn't get the air hose hopelessly wound up in the old wreck in the process. It was not until I had my hands and feet upon the ladder that I recognized the tugging at the life line which was the agreed-upon signal for me to come up quickly. Perhaps I needed the urging, but I don't believe it. Round by round I scrambled up, to the imminent risk, as I have since learned, of acquiring an attack of the "bends" by reducing the pressure too suddenly. None the less, I was alive and gasping when they reached down and hauled me over the schooner's rail.

Stirling and Whitcomb both fell upon me at the same instant to unfasten the headpiece. When they got it off, I saw that feverish excitement had come to take the place of the methodical carefulness which I had left behind me when I had bidden farewell to the upper world.

"Quick!" Stirling commanded, when I was once more breathing real air. "Get out of that rubber thing and knock your wits together! The *Estrella's* in sight on the other side of the island!"

Anybody would think that the experience I had just been through would have been enough to make an idiot of the sanest man alive; but it seemed to have just the opposite effect on me. In a flash I saw the desperate situation into which we had tumbled. We were due to be caught red-handed and helpless, with the salvaged treasure lying about in heaps on the *Casco's* deck. Added to that, Stirling's life and mine were at stake, and possibly Whitcomb's. If Spardoza should commit his robbery, he would see to it that no alien witnesses, at least, escaped to tell the tale.

I couldn't see for the life of me what was to be done, but Stirling had it all figured out and well on the way to accomplishment by the time I came on the scene. There was no time for explanations, and I could only gasp and wonder when Stirling and Whitcomb, shouting out orders to the Minorcan mate and the crew as they worked, stripped me out of my rubber manaclings.

Confusedly I got the idea at last. Some of the men were hurriedly dismantling the derrick and the diving apparatus to stow it away; another was drying the rubber suit and helmet with a swab and chucking them out of sight in the hold. The Minorcan and two of the men were loading the dinghy with the treasure ingots to the danger of knocking its bottom out with the heavy chunks of metal.

While I was struggling into my everyday clothes, the dinghy, loaded until its gunwales were nearly awash, with the Minorcan steering and his two helpers straining at the oars, made the first trip ashore. Stirling was snapping out his orders like a staff officer on a battlefield:

"Heave those derrick legs down and lash 'em just as they were! That's right; now the crab!" Then to me: "How did you leave things down below? Could anybody tell that you've been there?"

I smiled grimly. "If anybody should go down right now, he'd find a shark and a cuttlefish waiting to make him forget what he was looking for—if one of them hasn't already eaten the other."

"Heavens!" Stirling gasped. "Was that why you didn't come up?" And then he forgot me again and went on yelling at the men, urging them to hustle the ladder up over the side, and breaking off to plead with Whitcomb to shout more hurry orders at the dinghy crew ashore.

In all the frantic hustle I think nobody lost sight of the fact that at any instant the *Estrella's* nose might come poking around one end or the other of the island, to catch us, as you might say, with our hands in the cake batter. I got the facts in jerky sentences out of Stirling while we were lifting and tugging at the heavy gold bars in a second loading of the dinghy. Just as I was sending up the final bunch of ingots, the lookout man on the island had paddled off to the schooner with the news that the yacht was coming. The sea was calm, and the *Estrella* was under full steam. Therefore and wherefore——

It was a maddening drive to get the heavy cargo of ingots ashore and hidden in the palm thicket, with no time at all in which to do it. Three trips of the dinghy were required, and a fourth for Stirling and me; but by the time the small boat was ready for us we had the schooner looking much as she had looked when she left Havana —with the derrick poles stowed and lashed down, the crab in place, and the diving apparatus stored in the hold.

Just as we were swinging over the side, I remembered Velasquez locked in his cabin between decks.

"Hold on!" I cried. "It won't do to leave that Cuban here!"

At this the skipper winked solemnly with his single eye.

"Dead men don't talk any to hurt," he remarked. "I cal'late the water's deep enough hereabouts to drownd him, if so be we hev time enough."

I verily believe that this is what the one-eyed old sinner meant to do with Velasquez, but of course we couldn't stand for anything like that. In a trice the Cuban was hauled up from below, bound, gagged, and flung into the dinghy, and the Minorcan and his two oarsmen rushed the three of us ashore. When Stirling and I returned from dragging our prisoner into the thickest thicket of the palms, the mate had already made the return and he and the toiling crew had whipped the dinghy up over the side and into its chocks on top of the cabin.

We were barely in time. While I was admiring the way in which Whitcomb was disposing his men about the deck to make them look as if they had been waiting a solid week for something to turn up, Stirling grabbed me by the shoulder and pulled me back under the sheltering palmettos. Peering out through the leafy screen, we saw the yacht rounding the western headland of the reef.

Urged along at full speed by the impatient old buccaneer on the bridge, as we supposed, the *Estrella* cut a wide half circle and headed up for the inlet. Five minutes later she had come to anchor in the lagoon, a stone's throw from the *Casco,* and her steam winch was lowering her motor launch.

Our hiding place on the shore of the island could not have been much more than two or three hundred yards from the two vessels, and we could see plainly every move that was made. A couple of sailors held the launch steady at the accommodation steps while three men boarded it. Spardoza was one of the three, another was a bearded man in a frock coat and a billycock derby—a man whom we took to be the money lender who had staked Spardoza and had come along to make sure of getting his share of the loot. The third man was somewhere near my own size, and we guessed him for the diver.

It was at about the time that the launch was leaving the yacht's side that Stirling lost interest in its movements. At the after rail of the yacht three people appeared, lining up at the rail to gaze out upon our island. Two of them were easily recognizable as the two sisters I had met in Havana, and the third was a robed figure which we took to be the everlasting duenna. I knew what at least one of the sisters was thinking of as she stared across at the unanswering palms: she was recalling the day when the poor, sick castaway had been rescued only to be cruelly abandoned again.

Meanwhile, the launch had made its short journey, and Whitcomb and the Minorcan mate were helping the visitors aboard. There was a short colloquy on the schooner's after deck, and then the activities began again almost at the pace we had set in the dismantling process. Not to lose a moment for the want of plenty of help, the launch went back to the yacht, returning presently with a boatload of men. Many hands made light work, and in an incredibly short space of time the derrick was rigged, the diver's pumps were mounted, and my old friend the deep-sea ladder was thrust over the side.

Chuckling as we had some little warrant to, Stirling and I saw the fat diver wrestling himself into his rubber suit. Before the helmet was put on we saw

him look over the side and start back as if in affright.

"What does he see?" Stirling asked.

"If he sees half as much as I saw, wild horses couldn't drag him down to that wreck," I returned. "The squid was making the water as black as ink when I came up."

There was an argument, a pretty warm one, as it seemed, going on in the fore chains of the schooner. The diver was shaking his head and making motions as if he would get out of his suit, and Spardoza and the black-whiskered gentleman were evidently expostulating angrily with him. After a while the fat man submitted, as one under compulsion, and pretty soon we saw him come over the rail and begin to descend the ladder.

"What will he find, Anson?" Stirling asked, with more than a touch of anxiety in his voice.

"He will find just what you found and what I found, minus the gold," I answered. "The sand is almost as hard as a cement floor, and I don't believe I left any traces that he can discover. Besides, the water will still be murky with the cuttlefish spoutings, and that will help some."

"It gives me cold chills every time I think of what you've just been through for me," Stirling shuddered. "Did you know the squid was there when you first went down?"

In low tones I told him the story of my adventure, and at the end of it he was gripping my hand in a way to make the bones crack. "I can only say one thing, Anson," he burbled. "If it had been the other way around, I would have done it for you—and the girl."

"Forget it," I said, "and tell me what you did while I was out of hearing."

"It's only a stop-gap—this hiding-out game of ours," he explained. "I felt it in my bones that the thing which has happened was likely to happen, and while the gold was coming up I worked on the skipper's imagination—and his miser nerve; showed him how he and his men stood to profit richly by my find if we should win out, and how he and the crew would get nothing more than their wages if Spardoza came out on top. He saw the point and he made his men see it. It wasn't hard after they had got their eyes on the first bunch of gold bars that came up."

"Then you think the secret is safe with Whitcomb and his men?"

"The safety cable is as strong as human greed. I am confident that the skipper and his dock-walloping crew will stand by us—and the gold—until the cows come home."

By this time the diver had been down some fifteen minutes or so, and I could easily picture him crawling around among the skeleton timbers and cursing the Spardozan pipe dream which had sent him upon a fool's errand. While I was chortling over this, the copper helmet came up, dripping, at the schooner's side, and the underwater man was hauled aboard. It took only a minute or two to get the helmet off, and then the fun began.

Still as the tropical summer morning was, we could hear only a confused murmur of voices at our distance, but the gestures of the speakers were sufficiently enlightening. The diver was telling his two employers that they had been humbugged, and they were telling him that he was a frost and a fraud and threatening him with all sorts of things if he didn't go down again and do what he was hired to do. If our one-eyed old sinner of a skipper hadn't a sense of humor, he would have been the first Yankee I had ever known to be so lacking, and I could picture him chuckling inside like the chief of all the fiends at the discomfiture of the man whose bribe pocket hadn't happened to be as deep as mine and Stirling's.

The upshot of the argument was a second donning of the helmet for the recalcitrant diver, and another descent into the shark-bitten depths. This time he was down for a long time, and I could figure him digging around in the hard sand and trying to burrow his way into the old hulk.

During the interval of waiting, Stirling and I tried to plan for the next step; but, as had happened two or three times before, we found ourselves fac-

ing a solid wall of impossibilities. We could make no move at all while the *Estrella* lay in the lagoon, and we thought Whitcomb would do well if he could get food and water off to us under cover of the night without getting caught at it.

The best we could hope for was that Spardoza would finally give up the search and go away in the yacht, leaving Whitcomb to follow at his leisure with the slow-going schooner. But we could form no faintest idea of how long it might take the old buccaneer to make up his mind; and in the meantime there was always the danger that something would turn up to arouse his suspicions. Not to dig any deeper in this direction, our suit cases were still in the little cabin of the *Casco*. Moreover, when a secret has been carefully distributed among six or eight men, it may be said to have lost most of its keeping qualities.

The sun was pretty well up toward the zenith when the fat diver's headpiece once more came to the surface beside the *Casco*. What we saw when the man had been pulled aboard and had his helmet taken off was a warm repetition of the former scene, but without its sequel. At the end of a heated and angrily emphatic argument —judging by the gestures and arm wavings—the diver peeled off his rubber suit and apparently washed his hands of the entire mad business.

Shortly after this the motor launch went back to the yacht, carrying Spardoza and his black-whiskered shadow. A second trip took the sailors who had been commandeered to help Whitcomb and his men. This looked a little hopeful, we thought; Spardoza was getting his own ship's company together, and there seemed to be some little chance that he might be giving up the fight.

But all through the long, hot afternoon we watched in vain for some signs betokening the yacht's departure. There were none. The peace of the watery solitudes seemed to have settled down upon both the *Estrella* and the schooner, and so far as any human evidence went, both vessels might have been deserted. We did not dare to stir from our hiding place until dusk, though coconuts hung in clusters above us and we—especially Grant, with his convalescent's appetite—were half famished and so thirsty that we could scarcely speak above a whisper.

My conscience had been troubling me all day about Velasquez, who, putative murderer though he was, was getting the hot end of it all around. At the twinkling of the first electric light aboard the *Estrella,* I spoke to Stirling.

"We must go and look after Velasquez," I said. "He doesn't deserve much, but he isn't getting the little that even a hired assassin has a right to expect."

At this we got up stiffly and made our way to the little hollow in the center of the island to which we had dragged the Cuban. When we reached the place it was empty. Our captive had escaped.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE STARLIGHT.

As a matter of course, we began an immediate search for our vanished captive, quartering the palm thicket in every direction. It was not possible to make the search very thorough. The island was a half mile or more in its greatest dimension, and possibly a short quarter in breadth at its widest part, and the quest was made in the dark. Under such conditions there were many places in which a man might hide, and when we finally desisted it was with the uncomfortable feeling that we had a foot-loose enemy at our backs.

Before going to the small cove to the westward which had been agreed upon as the point to which Whitcomb would come in the schooner's dinghy when he should be able to communicate with us, we made sure that the cache of gold bars had been undisturbed. The ingots were lying as they had been thrown down in the haste of the transfer—in a little hollow in the heart of the palm wood. We covered them as well as we could in the dark with bro-

ken branches of the palmettos, and then made our way to the cove to wait for Whitcomb, food, and water.

All three came in the course of time, but it was a mighty long time for two famishing men; so long that we took alternate catnaps on the warm sands at the cove head, thereby catching up on some of the sleep lost in the previous night. It happened to be my watch on deck when the dark shadow of the dinghy, with a single man sculling at the stern, slipped noiselessly into the cove, and I aroused Stirling.

The skipper was as good as his word, bringing us an ample supply of ship's biscuit and boiled beef and a breaker of water, our weapons and ammunition belts, and, what was of no less importance to us, news. After filling in our eye picture of the forenoon scene on the *Casco's* deck, and telling us that the black-whiskered man was in fact the Havana money lender who had staked Spardoza at the last moment, Whitcomb rolled another little bombshell at us from his seat on the drawn-up bow of the dinghy.

"Ther's suthin' gone crookit," was the way he lit the fuse of the bombshell. "After the rumpus was over this mornin', Spardoza wanted to know what had 'come of his man Velasquez. I told him the feller hed got hisself washed overboard in the gale. He didn't look as though he more'n half believed it, but he asked for the Cuban's dunnage, and, wuss'n that, followed me below when I went to git it. O' course you two fellers hed to turn out this mornin' leavin' your door wide open and your traps all scattered round. I suspicion mebbe he saw 'em."

It was at this point that the dry ship's biscuit threatened to choke me, but I contrived to say: "Well, go on."

"He didn't say nuthin', but he looked an all-fired lot with them black eyes of his. 'Long about 'n hour ago he sent for me to come to the yacht. He's got women aboard, and a meechin' little priest, as I s'pose you've seen if you've been watchin'. Spardoza and Aguilar —he's the money lender—took me down into a stateroom and made me tell 'em a lot of lies about how long the *Casco* 'd been here and what we'd been doin' while we waited, and all that. Then Spardoza gimme my orders. I'm to git the schooner's mudhook up and go back to Havana. My job's done, and I've got my pay, and thet's all ther' is *to* it."

Stirling looked at me and I looked at him. But it was Grant who broke the breathless little silence that followed the skipper's announcement.

"Whitcomb, we've lost Velasquez," he said. "In the hurry I suppose he wasn't tied strongly enough. Do you suppose he's swum off to the yacht?"

"Shouldn't wonder a mite," was the calm reply.

My question came next: "When are you to sail?"

"Thet's the bitin' part of it. The *Casco* 's to git out to-night—right away —immejitly, if not sooner. I told him I couldn't take her out in the dark, with the trade a-blowin', but thet's all fixed—the motor boat's goin' to give us a tow out o' the lagoon."

I don't know how it struck Stirling, but I felt as if I were the last man left on a sinking liner, with the boats all full and pulling away.

"You'll have to contrive some way to take us with you," I broke in. "If Spardoza has seen Velasquez, this new move means that he is getting you out of the way so that he can murder us quietly and take the gold."

The one-eyed old sinner chuckled dryly.

"If I was you, I wouldn't run away and leave all that good money behind; and, anyhow, I don't know's I could git you aboard. They've turned a searchlight on the *Casco*, and that's why it took me so long to git here—hed to scull along under the shadder o' the reef. Besides, it's more'n likely they'll search the schooner."

"But you wouldn't have the heart to go away and leave us here to be murdered!" I exclaimed.

"Dunno but I might," was the cool reply, "if you hadn't cal'lated to gimme a look-in on the Cap'n Kidd chist. I might say it's all one to me if you want

to git into a rumpus with Spardoza's folks and git your throats cut. But the gold makes it a hoss of another color."

Stirling's laugh between mouthfuls of the hard biscuit and beef nettled me. It seemed so grotesquely out of keeping with our peril. But his word to Whitcomb explained it.

"You've got a plan of some sort up your sleeve, skipper; I know you have," he said. "What is it?"

Whitcomb answered with a question of his own:

"Whereabouts is the gold?"

We told him that it was well back from the beach, in the densest part of the palm thicket.

"Thet's good, 's fur as it goes. Now how about the reef on t'other side o' this island? Has it got a hole in it big enough for a snake to crawl through?"

"There is an inlet, but it's too narrow for the *Casco*," said Stirling.

"How much too narrer?"

"I don't know; narrower than the one on this side by ten or fifteen feet, I should say; and, besides, it's on the windward side of the island."

Again the dry chuckle came from the dinghy's bow. "I cal'late it won't scrape no paint off'n the schooner, seein' thet she ain't got none to be scraped. You leave the luffin' and fillin' to me. In about an hour after we git our tow round the yacht, you'll find the old hooker layin' up in the lagoon on t'other side a-waitin' fer you—and the gold—if so be the Lord still stays on our side."

It began to look feasible, just barely feasible. In fact, there was only one really weak spot in the skipper's plan. Spardoza's cupidity, backed by Velasquez's hungry desire for vengeance, might send the conspirators ashore after us as soon as the schooner had cleared on its supposed voyage to Havana. In other words, they might not wait until morning. But we'd been taking chances all along, and one more was all in the day's work.

What remained to be said was said quickly. Whitcomb was to make his way back to the schooner in the dinghy, and during the time at our disposal we were to begin to move the gold, a bar at a time, toward the northern beach —this because every minute saved would be that much added to our chance of escape from the pursuit which would be instantly made as soon as our absence should be discovered. After the skipper had started on his hazardous return, Stirling and I set out to begin the gold-carrying job. As yet there hadn't been a word said about the two young women. but I knew Stirling was thinking about them all the time—as I was.

It was just before we reached the gold cache that Stirling broke the silence of the groping tramp under the palms.

"There's something lacking in this scheme of Whitcomb's, Anson," he said gravely. "It makes no account of the woman I love—of her and her sister. From what you have told me, it is plain that they are living in mighty bitter bondage to this old scoundrel who has squandered their fortune. I have been hoping all along that, some way in this mix-up, we'd be able to set them free. Instead of that, we are planning to turn our backs and run away."

That was precisely what we were doing, but I couldn't see any help for it, and said so.

"There ought to be some help for it," Stirling insisted. But after that he said no more, and we addressed ourselves to the task of moving the gold.

At first we tried carrying the ingots one at a time, with a man at each end, but this was ridiculously awkward. The bars were thick and short, and, while they were too heavy for one man to carry alone, stumbling along through the dark wood, they were not big enough to be handled by two. So I turned some of the good old Turley Plow invention loose and made a couple of drags out of tough bushes that we found growing among the palmettos. By using some of the creeping vines for strings, we could lash an ingot on the

flattened bush and tow the contrivance with its load by the bush's stem.

The little trick worked well, but its result was to separate us. Stirling started with the first bush drag, and by the time I had mine ready he had reached the north beach with his load and was coming back for another. We had made half a dozen trips in this way, when it occurred to me that perhaps it might be the part of prudence to go and take a look at the southern lagoon to make sure that nothing was threatening.

This idea suggesting itself while I was at the gold-cache end of the route, I dropped my bush and kept on straight ahead to the southern beach. As it chanced, I was just in time to see the *Casco* going out, a phantom ship, bulking dimly in the starlight. The yacht's motor launch was towing her by slow inchings, and her sails were not yet hoisted. So far as I could see, there was no one stirring on the yacht, and no lights visible save the staring searchlight on the bridge, which was still turned upon the place which the schooner had just left.

While I was debating as to whether it wouldn't be wise to wait until I had seen the launch come back, a small sign of life showed up on the *Estrella*. The accommodation gangway was on the shoreward side of the yacht, and against the white background of the hull I saw two dark figures descend to stand waiting upon the little platform at the water level.

Shading my eyes from the glare of the searchlight beam, I saw, close up under the yacht's bilge, a dark object like a small boat making its way cautiously aft toward the gangway. A closer scrutiny resolved the doubt; it was a boat propelled by a single occupant, who seemed to be paddling it awkwardly with an oar over the side, Indianwise.

At the accommodation platform there was a short pause, and the two standing figures got into the boat which was then pushed off and headed for the shore, the boatman still paddling with the single oar, first over one side and then over the other, and doing it so silently that no sound reached my ears save the soft rippling of the water under the boat's prow.

When the boat reached the berth just opposite my hiding place, the three figures got out. At first I thought they were all women. After a momentary pause, they separated, two of them going off up the beach a little way, while the other remained near the boat. All this was mysterious enough, but another twist was added when I saw the two who had gone apart kneel together on the white sand and heard the murmur of voices, a man's voice and a woman's, joined in a low-toned, monotonous chant.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE.

Just as I had made up my mind that the two kneeling together on the beach were reciting some sort of a litany, the other woman, left behind at the boat's prow, began to move slowly up the sands and directly toward my crouching place behind the palmettos. She hadn't taken more than half a dozen steps before I recognized her in spite of the mantilla thing she was wearing over her head. I let her come to within a few feet of me in her apparently aimless little stroll before I could muster up the courage to speak.

"Miss Mendez!" I called in low tones. And then: "Don't be afraid—it's only the fat man you ran over one day in Havana."

Of course it was up to her to shriek and run away and do a lot of absurd things, with the best possible reasons for doing them. She had lest seen me in my sitting room at the Hotel Sevilla, and had no more idea than the man in the moon that she would next find me hiding in the brush in an abandoned island in the Caribbean. But the brave little girl was all wool and a yard wide, and, though I knew she must be absolutely frantic with astonishment inside, she gave no sign of alarm.

"You?" she murmured, matching my guarded tone. "You are here—alone?"

"I am alone just at the present moment, but your—my friend is not very far off. We came in the *Casco*."

"You came to get the treasure which was only a sick man's dream. I am sorry."

At that moment I would have trusted her with my life, and I did trust her with our secret.

"You needn't be too sorry for us," I said. "We came to get the treasure, and we did get it."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, with a quick little indrawing of her breath. "That explains—so much!"

"Tell me," I commanded, quite as if I had a right to.

"It is a tragedy," she shuddered. "To-morrow morning my sister marries the Señor Aguilar—the black-bearded one. For long months he has persecuted her, and now she is sold to him for the money Cousin José has borrowed. She makes her vigil with the good Father Angelo to-night, as you see. It is as if to-morrow she is to die!"

"You mean that your cousin is to pay his debt to the money lender in this way?"

"It is true; the Señor Aguilar was to share the gold, and there is no gold. If by chance the adventure should turn out as it *has* turned out, Cousin José was to give his creditor my sister in marriage."

In a flash I saw the true inwardness of the thing. Spardoza was not only a sneak thief and a murderer, but he was going to double cross his accomplice. In the morning he would pay his debt and doubtless get some sort of a legal quittance from the lovesick old money shark, after which he would be free to take the treasure for himself.

"Tell me one thing more," I begged: "Is your cousin's secretary on board the yacht?"

"Martino Velasquez? He is."

That explained it all with perfect clarity. Velasquez had told what he knew, and Spardoza had laid his treacherous plan accordingly. A desperate expedient was trying to drive itself into my brain, and it was partly to gain time that I said: "Your sister has good reasons for not wishing to marry this man?"

"It will be more bitter than death to her. It can make no difference if I tell you now—Tita loves another."

Every moment I had been expecting that Stirling would burst in upon things, and now that expectation was realized in a most startling fashion. Grant had missed me from the carrying route, and had come to the southern beach to find out what had become of me. Missing his direction a little, it so chanced that he came upon the sands at a point directly opposite the two who were kneeling together in the sorrowful vigil.

We saw him burst through the undergrowth, stand for a moment as if he were transfixed, and then make a quick dart to gather one of the kneeling figures in his arms. *"Madre de Dios!"* gasped the little one at my side; and then, before I knew what I was doing, I had my arm around her and was trying to comfort her.

"Miss Mendez—Estrella!" I said. "You mustn't be too hard on them. They are young, and—they love."

She drew herself away; not too stiffly, though—not half as stiffly as she had a right to. "But I am not Estrella; I am Marilla," she corrected quietly.

That was when the heavens fell *biff!* upon the head of one Anson Turley. It was all plain enough when I came to think of it. Stirling had never described his particular sister for me, and I hadn't described mine for him. For an instant or two I stood gaping like a boy caught with his fingers in his mother's sugar bowl; but I hadn't been a sales manager for four or five years for nothing. It took me just two gasps to get my breath, and then I said:

"Let me ask something of the American half of you, Miss Marilla: Have you any deep-rooted, inborn prejudice against fat people?"

She made a little, low, gurgling sound which I took to be a laugh with a small dash of mockery in it.

"But you are not fat; you are only big and strong," she said.

"I look fat, and people say I am." Then I broke off suddenly. "Do you know what's going to happen to those two over yonder—Grant and your sister?"

"I know they are both going to be very, very unhappy."

"They are not," I countered boldly. "Before this night is over, I'll venture to say they will find a way to walk hand in hand into the seventh heaven of bliss. Listen: The *Casco* has not sailed away. In a little while she will be waiting for us on the other side of this island. Your good Father Angelo—I think your Cousin José's guardian devil must have been off his job to let him bring a priest along—is going to marry them, and we'll all sail away together."

She didn't protest—didn't have time to. Stirling was coming up with the statuesque sister on his arm, and the little priest following along behind; and they were all judiciously keeping in the shadow of the forest edge.

"You know what's going to be done," Stirling said to me, just like that—as confidently as if he had heard what I had been saying to Miss Marilla.

"I can guess it," I rejoined.

"There is no time to lose," he snapped out. "The women and Father Angelo will be missed, and we know what to expect when that happens. Let's get as far away from here as we can, and as near to the place where we are hoping to find the schooner." And, so saying, he led the way into the wood with the young woman, who was clinging to him as if he were her last hope, leaving us to follow as we pleased. As before, the little priest walked behind his own particular charge, and the older sister and I were left to bring up the rear. I saw that it was now or never.

"This time," I began, "I am going to speak to the Cuban half of you, because in America we are a little shy of the too great suddennesses. The last time we were together I told you you mustn't be surprised at anything that might come to pass. You two, your sister and you, seem to have one gift in common, and that is to make a man fall in love with you at sight. You did it to me, you know, on the day when you climbed out of the auto to find out whether you had killed me or if I had merely made a dent in the radiator of your cousin's machine."

It was the American half of her that answered me: "You mustn't be ridiculous, Señor Turley; and the time when we are all in so great danger is not a time for joking."

"I am far from joking, I assure you; and it is precisely because we are in great danger that I am smashing all the conventions. In a few minutes Grant Stirling will have the right to defend your sister with his life. Won't you give me the same right to defend you?"

Again it was the American half of her that spoke. "Not for the reason you have given," she answered quietly.

"I have tried to tell you that there is a better reason. Any man can say, 'I love you;' but I can go farther and prove it. I have been believing all along that *you* were the sister that Grant was pining away for, and it was as much to help along your happiness as his that I flung away all the common sense I've been gathering up in the business years and came along on this Arabian Nights' voyage."

She was silent for the measuring of perhaps a hundred yards of the forest walkway, then she said, quite soberly: "I believe this that you say, Señor Turley—with both halves of me. But there is one thing you must know. We—my sister and I—have no home, no money, and after what has occurred, and what I once told you—that our cousin would sell either or both of us if the price were sufficiently high—I—I am afraid of my own motive. I would rather die than go back to the life I have been living for the past two years—since my father died. It would not be fair to you, Señor Turley."

"But if I am willing to take the chances? And I am willing to take them, if you'll only say that there isn't anybody else, and that you don't hate a fat man."

For another little space measuring she was silent, and then she said: "There is no one else; and I have had

my ideals, as I suppose all young women have. My—my prince was to be a man big enough to stand between me and the whole world. My father was not like our Cubans; he was big and fair—like you. He could have broken Cousin José over his knee. And, like you again, he was good and trusting—far too trusting. We are orphans, indeed, Señor Turley."

This was certainly the most unique acceptance a man ever had to a proposal of marriage; but I had just wit enough to read between the lines of it and not to spoil things by talking too much. She was stumbling along over the palmetto stumps broken down by the gold dragging, and this gave me an excuse to pick her up and carry her in my arms as if she had been a child—she wasn't much more than one—and I did not put her down until we were all five of us standing on the northern beach.

There was no sign of the *Casco* as yet, for good reasons—in the baffling breeze the schooner had not yet had time to weather the western end of the island. I think we all understood that time was the most precious commodity in the world just then, and Stirling made prompt use of what there was of it.

"Anson, we are going to be married, Miss Estrella and I, here and now. I take it for granted you have been told of the situation on Spardoza's yacht?"

"I have," I admitted.

"Then you will see that there is nothing else to be done. If the alarm is given and Whitcomb doesn't get here in time, I must have the right to fight for the Señorita Estrella as my wife—that and the right to take her home with me on the schooner, if we are lucky enough to win out. Will you back me in this?"

I looked at the little brown-eyed sweetness at my side, and she glanced up at me.

"We'll do more than that," I said. "We two, Miss Marilla and I, have just decided to take the big jump with you."

Stirling gasped a little at this. "Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "I thought I was pretty sudden, but you've got me beat a mile! I hope it isn't a case of hypnotic suggestion—seeing us two, and that sort of thing? I suppose you're both sure of what you are doing?"

"Are sure as anybody in the crowd," I returned. "But how about Father Angelo? Has he been sworn in yet?"

At this, both of the young women fell upon the mild-eyed little priest in Spanish. We couldn't tell what they were saying, but the little father's gestures were enough to assure us that he was expostulating wildly against the so unheard-of proceeding. In the same manner, as the gesticulations tamed down, we were made aware that he was being neatly pushed over the edge by the combined eloquence of the two fair pleaders.

"He fears the vengeance of my Cousin José," Marilla explained to me. "Also he urges that we are in no man's land, and that there is no church, no altar, only the crucifix on his rosary."

"Tell him that the island and to-night are as good for us as to-morrow morning and the yacht would be for the wedding your cousin had bargained for," I said.

There was a little more of the foreign talk, and then my small one explained again: "The father has no English, and you and Mr. Stirling have not the Spanish. He asks how he shall make you understand."

"That's easy," Stirling put in. "Tell him that you two will translate for us. If he thinks that won't make it binding enough, you can promise him that we'll have it all done over again after we get home."

Truly, I think there never was another wedding in this world celebrated like the double one which presently went forward on the beach of our lonely isle under the quiet stars. We stood together, the four of us, before the little priest, and if the situation hadn't been so desperate there would have been a touch of humor in the naïve translations of the two young women passing the words of the solemn ceremony on to Stirling and me.

When it came to the rings, we were sorely put to it. Stirling was lucky enough to be wearing a plain gold band, which, as I heard him whisper in an undertone to the statuesque one, could later be cut down. I was not so fortunate. My only possession in the jewelry line was a huge seal ring which the Turley traveling staff had given me when I was elected president. It was a clumsy and gorgeous gewgaw, and miles too big, but we made it answer.

It was while we were all four kneeling on the sand for the little father's benediction that I noticed that the wind was dying down, and the horrible thought seized me that Whitcomb, lacking a breeze, wouldn't be able to keep that frightfully vital appointment with us. I could scarcely wait for the *pax vobiscum* and permission to open my eyes and twist my head around to the westward to look for the welcome sails. But when I did so, the horizon, so far as the starlight illumined it, was still a blank.

This was bad enough, but there was worse to follow. Through the jungle reaches of the palm forest we began to hear sounds unmistakable, shouting and hoarse commands as of some one giving orders. An instant later a beam of white light swept over the treetops, and we knew that the yacht's searchlight was being turned upon the island. It was only too evident that the three deserters from the ship's company were missed. And the wind, which had been only dying a moment before, was now dead and buried.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE JOLLY ROGER.

It was Stirling who rose quick-witted to grapple with the crying urgencies. Fully half of the galleon treasure was yet lying in its little hollow in the wood. We might expect that immediate search would be made for it and for us, for the priest and for the women, and it was reasonable to conclude that this search would be made in widening circles from the small boat in which Father Angelo had brought the women from the yacht, and which had been left drawn up on the southern beach.

"It's up to us to get busy, and do it quick!" was Stirling's driving word; and we went at it hammer and tongs. The women were hidden under the thickest of the palmettos on the beach edge, where a man might stumble over them before he would find them, and the gold we had already brought over was piled up beside them. Then, taking advantage of the scraps and leavings of time which were still ours, Stirling and I dashed off to resume the ingot dragging. At our heels came Father Angelo, panting, and when he found out what we were trying to do he signed me to cut him a bush so that he could fall to with us—which he did like a man, gathering up his *soutane,* or cassock, or whatever it was, in a bunch under his waist cord to have his legs free.

Toiling like demons and running as we made the unladen half of the shuttling trips, we got the greater part of the treasure transferred before we heard the ominous splash betokening the hasty lowering of the motor launch over the yacht's side. At each return to the northern beach we cast anxious glances to seaward, but there were still no signs of the *Casco.* A horrible thought that Whitcomb might have deserted us came, and refused to be driven away, but there was little time to dwell upon it.

Still, luck was with us to a certain extent. We had secured the last of the ingots before a lurid glare of torches on the southern shore warned us that the search party had landed. All three of us were pretty well winded by this time, and were glad to throw ourselves down on the sands to puff and blow and get ready for the next act, the curtain for which rose when Stirling sat up suddenly with a hoarse "Thank God!" and an arm pointing to the westward. Around the farther extremity of the island we saw the *Casco,* drifting ghostlike through the lightly stirring air and heading in our direction.

It was touch and go now, with the odds all in favor of Spardoza's people.

At the rate she was coming, the *Casco* was due to use up half an hour or more working her way along the northern reef, and by that time Spardoza's buccaneers, if they were any good at all, would have found and murdered us. Once more Stirling showed how wide he had missed the mark in becoming an engineer when he should have been a soldier.

"We still have a little time," he rapped out. "When the bullets begin to fly, the women must not be exposed to them. Come with me!"

Explaining the situation quickly to the two who were cowering under the palmettos, we made them lie down, and built a barrier of the gold bars around them on the land side, most likely the strangest barricade that was ever erected to protect innocence and virtue. That done, we three men fell to with our hands to scoop up the sand in a tiny breastwork over the ingots, Stirling telling his wife, as we worked, that she and her sister were to stay where they were, and that they were to make the priest understand that he was to stay with them.

That command of Grant's pretty nearly brought on a revolution. Most naturally, the two women wished to share the hazards—all of them—and we were determined that they should not. They listened to the voice of authority in the end, but when we hurried down the beach a little way and began to dig ourselves into the sand at a point on the jungle edge which would place the helpless ones out of range, Father Angelo was again at our heels, and no dog on the trail of a woodchuck ever dug faster than he did when it came to pawing out our shallow breastwork.

Grant drove him away at the last, making him go back to the women after we had a little windrow of the sand heaped up barely high enough to cover us when we were lying flat on our faces. The search had not come directly across the island; it had progressed in widening circles, as we thought it would, with the stranded small boat as its center. Meanwhile, the *Casco* was creeping up; and, better than all, the breeze was freshening again.

We had done all we could, and now came a little interval of suspense which was fairly heartbreaking. At first it seemed to be an open question as to which would reach us first, the schooner edging up to the inlet through the reef, or the torch-bearing mob in the wood. What I was most afraid of was that somebody in the mob would catch sight of the *Casco*—a thing which would immediately precipitate an attack before we could hope to get help.

Stirling swore softly. "They'll get us, Anson; and if I could only have a word with Whitcomb before we're snuffed out, I wouldn't mind it so much."

"And if you could?" I questioned.

"I'd tell him the gold was his if he'd fight for it and save the women."

That was spilt milk, and there was no use crying over it. Moreover, it was plain that we were destined to have our try-out before Whitcomb could reach us. The line of torches was stretching to right and left, and we knew that it wouldn't do to let any of the torch bearers swing around far enough to discover the barricade under the palmettos. We could see them now—shadowy figures beating back and forth under the palms, some of them within easy pistol shot. We had good weapons for short range, modern automatics of the army caliber, and there was a sufficiency of ammunition.

"We mustn't wait too long," I whispered to Stirling; adding: "Those fellows on the right are getting dangerously close to the women."

For reply Stirling extended his weapon over the sand bank, and a single shot crashed upon the night. There was a shriek, and the farthest of the torches went out as if a bucket of water had been thrown upon it. If we had been counting upon the effect of a surprise, we were not disappointed. There was a scattering volley, every shot of which went high over our heads, and a sudden contraction and retraction of the enemy's line. The torches still marked the line for us, however, and Stirling

gave his order briefly: "Volley fire over the top of the sand bank—one shot at a time, and not too fast." And when I pulled trigger, he chimed in with me.

It was my first experience shooting at anything more important than the brown bear of the Canadian woods, but I tried to emulate Stirling's coolness. The effect was what we were hoping it would be. There was a scattering reply, with a great whining and whistling of bullets overhead, as before; but we took our time, firing low in the torchlight and trying to make every shot count, and in less than a minute there was a *sauve qui peut*, with the torches getting themselves promptly extinguished, and the enemy falling over its feet in a hasty effort to get back out of range.

After this came a lull, which was much more trying than the battle itself. In the darkness and silence we could picture the buccaneers creeping up to surround us. The breeze was freshening a little more; there was enough now to make a sibilant rustling in the frondage of the palms. The sound was only an exaggerated whisper, but it was enough to drown the noise of cautious footsteps.

Glancing backward over our shoulders, we could see the white loom of the *Casco's* sails. The schooner was now well abreast of us and was still coming on, which showed that Whitcomb had not been scared off by the battle clamor.

"Will he be able to find the inlet?" I asked.

Stirling shook his head doubtfully. "It is very narrow, little more than a gash through the coral. And there isn't sca enough on to place it for him." Then, grittingly: "Good Lord! I wish I knew what those devils in front are doing! This suspense is something fierce!"

It *was* fierce; there were no two ways about that. Though we were not more than three or four rods down the beach from the gold-bar barricade, it might as well have been as many miles, so far as communicating with the women was concerned. At the moment I would have given all the money I ever expected to make to be sitting comfortably at my desk in the Turley Plow Works, with the brown-eyed little sweetness who had just taken my name safely at the end of a short telephone wire, where I could call her up now and then to ask her if she were sorry she had married a fat man.

"What under heaven do you suppose they're doing?" came impatiently from Stirling.

I tried my best to put two and two together. In our forenoon spyings upon the yacht we had both marked a canvas-covered thing on the bridge, and had both wondered if it might not be a machine gun. Above the sighing of the wind in the treetops we could hear the *putt-putt* exhausts of the motor launch, either going back to the yacht or returning from it. Had they gone after the Maxim?

We were not left very long in doubt. At a glance backward I saw the schooner coming bows on toward the outer reef. If the attack should come, as before, from directly in front of us, the *Casco* would be exactly in range. And the attack was coming. We could now hear tramplings in the wood, though there were no torches this time. Presently a single rifle bullet came whistling overhead. It was an invitation for us to show where we were by replying to it.

This put us between the horns of a frightful dilemma. If they had the machine gun, and we should fire on them, they would locate us by the flashes and turn the murder machine loose in our direction; and, missing us, they would be measurably certain to rake the schooner fore and aft. On the other hand, if we didn't show them where we were, they might sweep an arc with the Maxim—an arc wide enough to include the gold-bar barricade and those who were so insecurely hidden behind it.

We waited until a second rifle bullet came slapping through the broad-leafed palmettos. They were aiming lower

now, and we both felt the wind of the high-power bullet.

"Whitcomb will have to take his chance with us," said Stirling grittingly; "it's the only chance for the women and the priest." And with that he raised himself upon his elbow and emptied the automatic in the general direction of the rifle flash.

When he dropped back to reload, I sat up and took my turn. There was every reason to suppose that the buccaneers, with their long-range weapons, would have halted well back out of pistol shot, but the shouts and yells of pain were sufficient evidence that they hadn't. Nevertheless, some of them stuck by the machine gun long enough to give us one belt of cartridges. There was a roar like the breaking of many timbers, and for a few seconds the air was full of hurtling missiles, all of which flew well over our tiny shelter under the beach edge, but there was a shriek to seaward to tell us that some one on the schooner had been hit.

"We can't stand for this!" Stirling gasped. "Are you game to rush that gun with me, quick, before they can get another belt in?"

It's funny; but at this demand I had a swift and most unnerving recurrence of that boyhood notion I have spoken of—of how a big man offers a target twice the size of anybody else. I thank God it didn't stay with me. The smell of the battle was in my nostrils, and when Stirling leaped up and plunged into the palm shadows, firing as he ran, I was right where I should have been, racing shoulder to shoulder with him, and with that cowardly target thought entirely displaced by the echo of a few low-spoken words: "My prince was to be a man big enough to stand between me and the whole world."

After all, the capture of the gun was just about the easiest thing imaginable. I've always thought since that Spardoza's men must have believed that the schooner had made her landing, and that they were facing a charge of the *Casco's* crew. I don't mean to say that they didn't fight. There were a lot of shots fired, and I got a souvenir in one arm. But when we reached the Maxim there was nobody there to stop us, and we dragged the gun away to the beach in triumph, not forgetting to grope around in the dark and secure the box of cartridge belts.

We had scarcely slued the gun around on our own side of the battlefield when we heard Spardoza or somebody rallying the enemy for a counter charge. Luckily Stirling knew how to work the gun—as I didn't—and a single blast from the infernal machine quieted things wonderfully.

That was the end of it for the time being. While Stirling was fitting a second cartridge belt to the gun, the schooner's dinghy was driven upon the beach and Whitcomb was with us. True to character, he did not ask if anybody were hurt; he wanted to know where we'd put the gold.

Stirling told him briefly, adding: "You'll find Mrs. Turley and Mrs. Stirling with it—and the priest, Father Angelo. Put them all aboard first, and then come and get the gold bars. We can hold those fellows back, now that we have the Maxim."

But the one-eyed skipper had a word of his own to say, and he waited long enough to say it:

"Married, eh? Well, I vum to gracious!" And then shortly: "Hurry's the word. You ain't captured the hull armament o' that steamboat, not by a long shot. She's carryin' a rapid-firer on her fore deck; I saw it when I went aboard."

To fit this new scare word there was embarking in hot haste. Obeying his orders, Whitcomb put the women and the priest aboard first, and then turned out his crew in the schooner's longboat to make the toilsome shift of the treasure. Stirling and I stood by the machine gun, ready to repel another attack if it should come. My arm was beginning to hurt like the mischief, though, as nearly as I could determine, the souvenir bullet had made only a flesh wound.

While Whitcomb and his men were hurriedly loading the ingots, the buccaneers opened on us with the rapid-firer

clear across the island, as Whitcomb had predicted they would. A shell came shrieking through the treetops to burst well beyond the *Casco,* and it was followed by a number of others in quick succession. As with their smaller arms, the yacht's people were aiming too high, but that wasn't such a great comfort as one might imagine it to be. We were both in deadly fear that the next shell might land upon the schooner.

Amid the crashing of the shell explosions, the treasure was finally gotten aboard. The last trip of the longboat took us and the Maxim; and now came the greatest hazard of the adventure, namely, getting the schooner out of the shut-in lagoon under the fire from the opposite side of the island.

I don't know how it would have been accomplished if somebody's foot hadn't slipped. The rain of shells continued, and, though the projectiles were all falling outside of the reef, it was perfectly plain that we couldn't make the slow passage through the narrow inlet with anything like a chance of escape. I was beginning to feel a little bit how-come-you-so from the loss of blood, and Marilla, *my* Marilla, scared white, was trying to bind up the bullet cut for me when the unlooked-for climax came. In a little pause in the pouring stream of shells there was a burst of flame beyond the trees to make the entire island outline itself vividly against a sky-reaching background of red, a crash like the fall of an office building, and silence—the silence of the tomb.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FORWARD LIGHT.

Whitcomb was able to take all the time he needed to warp the *Casco* out to sea, which he did by sending anchor cables out to the reefheads in the longboat, and using the windlass for pulling power. When we got outside, the wind died down again, and it was two full hours later, and the September sun was thrusting itself above the horizon, when we completed the slow, drifting crawl around to the southern side of the island.

I don't know what we expected to find in the southern lagoon, but in common humanity we could not sail away without going to see what there was to be found, though the flinty-hearted old skipper would have done this very thing if Stirling and I hadn't insisted.

What we saw was an empty harbor; empty, at least, of all but the tip of one of the *Estrella's* signal masts. There was no sign of life visible anywhere when the *Casco* half drifted, half sailed through the entrance to the lagoon. It seemed incredible that the yacht had gone down with all on board, and, as the event proved, she hadn't—quite. As in the wreck of the *Santa Maria,* there was one man left to tell the tale.

Marilla, *my* Marilla, saw him first—a big, shapeless figure of a man, squatting on the highest edge of the beach, with his knees drawn up and his face hidden in his hands. Whitcomb sent the dinghy ashore and had him brought aboard. It was the fat diver, a Cuban, who could speak no English, and to the two women he told the story of the explosion.

In accordance with his custom on other cruises, Spardoza had taken a small cargo of arms, ammunition, and high explosives on the yacht on the chance of turning an honest penny with some revolutionary outfit in the Little Americas before he should return to Havana. Marilla said that he had done it before, not once, but many times. As nearly as the diver could understand, some one had been careless in the serving of the rapid-firer, and, so far as he knew, he was the only survivor.

The yacht was down in deep water, and we could see the wreck of her keeping company with that other wreck of centuries before. There was nothing to be done about it, and while the diver was still in the midst of his excited story the morning breeze sprang up and our dour-faced skipper was heading the *Casco* toward the open water. By nine o'clock, the wind freshening still more, the nameless island was hull down on the southeastern horizon. Stirling and the statuesque sister had gone below, Mrs. Stirling insisting, because Grant

was still only a convalescent and for two nights he had gone mighty short on sleep. Marilla and I were at the after rail of the schooner, waiting to see the magic island vanish into the limbo of things past and to be forgotten. We were both pretty quiet. The end of the buccaneering old sugar planter and his crew, richly deserved as it was, still had all the elements of a frightful tragedy.

That would sufficiently account for Marilla's soberness; but my own had a deeper wellspring. A short month earlier I would have sworn that romance was dead and buried; and that in the very nature of things it could never have a resurrection in a humdrum, twentieth-century world of bargain and sale and inventions and machinery. Could it be possible that I was finishing a month that would fit in nowhere this side of the sixteen hundreds—that I was, as you might say, a freshly mustered-out fighter of pirates, and was going back to the plows and the sales sheets? In the light of such questions as these, the events of the past few days and weeks were threatening to take on the proportions of a hashish delirium; but the trim little figure beside me was a reality to tie me to the great romance.

I felt that it was up to me to lighten her gloom a little if I could, so I said:

"There is only one thing I am going to try to remember about that island, Marilla, dear, and that is the minute when I knelt with you on the beach and Father Angelo put his hands on our heads in giving us his blessing. It wasn't merely a dream, was it? I'm sure I hadn't been eating anything to make me dream a dream like that."

"It was no dream," she said softly.

"I'm going to hang on to that part of it like a dog to a root," I went on. "I can see a time coming when it's going to be my one and only anchor. Consider a moment: Up to the day when I started to Havana to nurse Grant, nothing in the least romantic had ever happened to me. Perhaps the American half of you knows what an American business man's life is like, but I doubt it. It is all sewed up and wadded together in the one word: 'practical.' If any one had told me that the events of the past month, and particularly of the past few days, were possible in the twentieth century, I should have laughed at him and asked him where he got his liquor."

"Yes?" she encouraged gently.

"I am going back now—we are going back—to the plain, everyday things of modern civilized life. If I didn't have you, I'm sure I shouldn't survive the change—or if I did survive it, I should gradually come around to the idea that I'd had a bad spell of fever or something, and dreamed, in some sort of a crazy delirium, all these things that have happened to us. You won't let me do that, will you?"

The island of tragedies was but a faint blur in the sun-shot distances when she looked up to say, with the brown eyes shining:

"I shall be to you the memory of all the happinesses that have come to us, my Anson—of these, and of nothing else."

And so, God bless her, she has been.

THE LURE OF THE PENCIL

CHARLES NAGEL is now one of the greatest lawyers in the country. He practices his profession in St. Louis, and lays up large stores of money thereby. But, when a boy and a young man, he wanted to be an artist. Artists, however, he observed, did not make much money until they became famous, and it took all of them a long time to win fame. Consequently, he decided to study law and earn money sufficient to meet his financial obligations.

But his yearning for brush and pencil has never left him. Even now, when he is receiving clients and reviewing weighty matters with them, he makes pictures and caricatures of them on a scratch pad beside him as he talks.

Buck's War Baby

By J. Frank Davis

Author of "A Fourfold Game," "Garland: Ranger Service," Etc.

Introducing Ayesta, the Woman Who Sees. A little matter of investment that provided some quiet excitement for Colonel Buck Leonard, of Texas, in the City of New York

THERE is a chophouse on Broadway, not far from the Metropolitan Opera House, where at noontime the waiters carefully appraise their patrons before offering them a menu card. If in doubt, the servitor lays tentatively on the table two bills of fare—one listing luncheon dishes, the other such breakfast staples as small steaks and ham and eggs. If the customer chooses the breakfast bill, he is an actor. If he orders a luncheon, he is a business man.

Into this chophouse, at five minutes after twelve, turned Colonel Buck Leonard, of Mendon, Texas, cattleman, banker, real-estate operator, and ex-Ranger. He had no more than ordered —from the luncheon bill—when a well-dressed little man, who should have been good looking if his eyes had not been a trifle too close together, and who had been unobtrusively following the Texan since that lean and sun-tanned person left the Van Wouter Hotel at eight o'clock that morning, came in, looked about the room with the air of one seeking an acquaintance, and stepped quickly across to the table where Buck sat. He dropped his hand familiarly on Leonard's shoulder with a cheery: "Good morning, colonel!"

Buck looked up quickly, without recognition; and the other, after staring a second, stammered with embarrassment.

"My mistake," he apologized. "I saw your back as I came in, and crossed over to eat with you. I took you for my friend, Colonel Achorn, of Oklahoma City."

Leonard smiled genially. "Lots of us Westerners is built on the same general lines," he said. "And most of us answer to 'colonel.'"

"As a matter of fact, now I get a good look at you, you don't look like him at all," the little man admitted, still somewhat flustered. "I hope you'll excuse my coming over and slapping you on the shoulder that way. I thought it meant an opportunity not to eat alone. Forgive me, won't you?"

He made ever so slightly as though to move on to another table. Leonard's smile continued warm, and his voice was cordial: "Well, there isn't any need to eat alone that I can see—not if you still feel like havin' company. Down in my country, folks don't have to be introduced to eat at the same table and pass the time o' day."

With a murmur of appreciation, the well-dressed man slid into the opposite chair, picked up the bill, and immersed himself momentarily in its contents.

Right here, if he had been familiar with the Southwest, he would have noted a detail of Buck's conduct that did not ring true to sectional form. According to the rules, Buck should have added, when he invited the stranger to sit with him at meat, "Leonard is my name," and looked inquiringly at the other in expectation of receiving his name in return. Even a bill collector, in Buck's country, entering a store or office in the course of his routine work, thus states his name as the beginning of all acquaintance. The colonel, strangely enough, neither volunteered his name nor gave any details as to his place of

residence. The well-dressed little man, being of New York a New Yorker, was unconscious of the omission.

The luncheon, each seeming to be about as hungry as the other, pursued its orderly course from Little Necks to coffee. They conversed on a variety of unimportant topics. Ultimately—as was the case with every desultory conversation that week—the talk reached the great explosion of war supplies just down the bay the Sunday morning before, and the consequent boom in the glass-put-in business by virtue of its earthquake-approaching reactions.

"There's a queer thing about that," said the little man. "I suppose you've heard of Ayesta?"

Colonel Leonard shook his head negatively. "Sounds like a Mexican name to me," he remarked. "What is it? New kind of guncotton, or just a breakfast food?"

"Haven't you read about her in the papers? 'Ayesta—the Woman Who Sees!' That's what it says in her literature. Fortune teller. Trances. Crystals. All that sort of thing. I don't know how she does it—never believed in fortune telling or anything of that sort myself—but there's something remarkable in the woman's ability. What I was going to say was that she predicted this explosion more than three weeks ago; told just how it was going to shake up the town and break plate glass and everything. Of course nobody paid any attention to the prophecy; nobody ever does. They say she predicted the European war, too, and back of that the *Titanic* disaster. I don't know. I never put much stock in that sort of thing."

"I wish she'd tell me why it didn't rain on my cotton farm this summer," laughed Leonard, albeit a little ruefully. And here again was something of a mystery, had the little man only sensed it, because, while Colonel Leonard is a man of considerable substance in his own land, and possesses many acres, most of which are hard at work in one way or another, not a single cotton seed has he planted since the summer of 1914, when the shot fired by one Prinzip at Sarajevo knocked the Texas cotton market to pieces almost between night and morning.

The other laughed tolerantly. "I don't suppose there's anything in it," he said. "And yet a friend of mine in the same business—I'm a broker downtown—told me he got a tip from her that made him a lot of money. Of course it was all an accident. It doesn't stand to reason she could guess anything about markets and all that, now does it?"

"Quién sabe!" said Buck.

"Eh?"

"It translates: 'Who knows?' I've seen some queer things done by old Mexican women and Indians. I don't pretend to explain it. Maybe she's got some kind of a power."

The stranger eyed the ashes on his cigar for a moment, as though thinking. "I wonder!" he said, half to himself. He laughed self-consciously. "I've had a notion to go see her some afternoon," he said almost apologetically. "She only asks five dollars a sitting. But I'd feel like a fool going up there alone and asking her to tell my fortune, like some shopgirl who wants to know whether a dark man with thrilling eyes is really going to be her fate." He looked at his watch. "Do you know," he said, "I've half a mind to try it to-day?"

"A man can try anything once," agreed Buck.

The other smiled amiably across the table. "I don't suppose you'd want to go along and see her, too?" he said.

Buck considered this a moment thoughtfully. "I don't know why not. I ain't got any business to take up my time until to-morrow. I was kind of thinkin' of goin' to a show this afternoon, or down to Coney Island. I don't know why this Ey-ester person wouldn't be as entertainin' as a show."

"By gracious, let's do it! But hold on! They say she's so busy you have to make an appointment. Maybe she couldn't see us. Suppose I go to the telephone and see if we can get in."

This being agreeable to Buck, the dapper little man disappeared in the

direction of a telephone booth. Colonel Leonard smoked calmly until his return.

"All right!" laughed the stranger, as he resumed his seat. "The man who answered the phone said she had an appointment at two o'clock, but we could get in at one-thirty. She's only four or five blocks above here, between Broadway and Sixth." They prepared to leave. "I feel sort of like a fool," he remarked, "setting out on an errand like this. Don't you?"

"When a man's *been* a fool as many times as I have," grinned Buck, "*feelin'* like one don't impress him much. I've played faro against a sandy deck when I suspected as much. After that, nothin's too foolish."

There were heavy Oriental hangings in the waiting room, and a strange odor, as though incense were struggling with boiled dinner for the supremacy, with the betting even. A tall, dark person in Far Eastern costume, who might have been Indian, but probably was mulatto, salaamed deeply, took their five dollars each, and escorted them into a darkened room in the middle of which stood an altar that could have been an ordinary center table covered with draperies that fell to the floor. On the altar they made out, in the semidarkness, a round object perhaps eight inches in diameter. "That must be the crystal ball they tell about," whispered the little man.

The tall, dark attendant spoke. "The mem-sahib, Ayesta, the Woman Who Sees," he said sonorously, "wishes to know which will she receive first."

"I don't care," remarked Buck.

"Let's have her tell us both together," suggested the other.

"Suits me, all right."

The attendant retired, and they sat waiting. Somewhere a deep-toned gong sounded. Then a shadowy woman in trailing white entered noiselessly through the portières, and sank languidly into a low seat behind the table. She sat there, her eyes fixed on the crystal, muttering unintelligible words.

The ball began to take on life and light. By some arrangement of tiny electric bulbs underneath, there appeared in it little flashes of flame that came and went, came and went. It brightened, turned purple, then blue, then red, and finally settled into a white that diffused only sufficient light to throw into relief the head of the woman who bent over it. She continued to mutter, her voice rising and falling as the light rose and fell.

Abruptly the jargon ceased, and she began to talk in understandable English, but in a babyish, childlike voice—such a voice and choice of phrases as an expert in the ways of trance mediums would at once have associated with the days when all the craft gathered annually at Onset, Massachusetts, and most of them were "guided" by "Indian maiden controls." By which token the said expert would have deduced that Ayesta was neither especially young, nor especially up to date.

"Hello, folks!" said the child voice. "You know me, I guess. I'm Singin' Brook. I've come to tell you about yourselves and help you to do something you want to do, because my medie asts me. I ain't goin' to ast you any questions, nor my medie ain't, either, but we're jest goin' to look in the pretty crystal and tell you what we see."

A pause ensued.

"Oh, look!" the voice went on. "I see a great, big building, with lots and lots of windows, and lots and lots of people goin' in and out of it. And I go in, and I go up—whiz!—in a little room that flies up in the air, and I get out of the whiz room, and there's a door, and I guess it's an office. And I see on the door some words. What do they say? 'E-m-m-e-t-t.' That's the first word. And the other is 'W-o-o-d.' I can't make out the rest of it, but it is Emmett and Wood-something. Oh, dear! There it goes! It's all fading out! But here comes another picture.

"It's a great, big field, and lots of something growin' in it. I never saw anything like that growin' when I was on the earth plane. It's all white, and there's a lot of folks workin'. I bet I know what it is. I bet it's cotton. And it's 'way off in—what is that place?—Texas. And I see three letters. What

are they? One of them is an 'L' and one of them is a 'B' and one of them is a 'J.' No, that ain't right. *Now* they've got straightened out. It's 'B. J. L.,' and I sense that those letters belong to the tall chief with the gray hair, and that the other words—the 'Emmett and Wood-somethin' belong to the little warrior in the gray clothes.

"Here are some more letters! They are a 'T' and an 'S,' and then a lot of funny little letters. Oh, yes, the little ones spell 'company.' It's something about a 'T. S. Company.' And I hear a voice. All right!" impatiently. "Speak a little louder! Oh, yes! The voice says: 'You will both have a great opportunity. Accept it. Do not delay. The door of opportunity opens quick and closes quick. It will mean much—much—it will mean—much money!'"

The voice had been growing fainter and fainter and more far away. It stopped abruptly. The woman in white shuddered. A fluttering sigh escaped her. She passed across her forehead a hand that showed pink and pudgy in the rays from the glass ball.

"Was the readin' satisfactory?" she suddenly asked, rising. Her voice, after the thin child's treble, was surprisingly deep and full.

"Why, yes, I should think so," said the little man, "although I don't understand everything you said. Do you?" he asked Buck.

The Texan shook his head. "What was you referrin' to, ma'am, when you mentioned that 'T. & S.?'" he asked.

Ayesta shrugged her shoulders. "I haven't no idear," she said. "I didn't even know I did. I'm entirely and absolutely unconscious of all mundane things whatsoever when I'm under control."

"Can't you do it a little more and find out?" the little man asked.

"No. I'm exhausted. There's a limit beyond which I cannot go at one readin'. If I was to try to get in communication with my control so soon again, prob'ly she'd get impatient. You might come back some other day."

"Thank you kindly," said Buck courteously. "Maybe we will."

Out on the street they gulped fresh, sunshiny air, and the stranger looked at Buck with eyes big with wonder.

"Now what d'ya know about that!" he breathed. "Did you hear her give that line of talk about the office building and 'Emmett and Wood-something?'"

"Shorely."

The man was fumbling excitedly in his pocket. He produced a card and handed it to Leonard. It read:

EMMETT & WOODBURY,
Brokers.

Presented by
WILLIAM H. WOODBURY.

"Can you beat that?" he demanded. "On the level, I never saw anything like it. And there was that talk about 'B. L. J.'—or was it 'B. J. L.?' Did that mean anything to you?"

"My name," said the colonel, "is Buckley J. Leonard."

"By gracious!" exclaimed the other. "There's something in it! There's bound to be! Why, I can see how she might have got my name—although I didn't tell it when I telephoned—but she couldn't possibly have got *your* name anywhere. I didn't know it myself. Gee! I wouldn't have believed it. Say! I feel the need of a drink. Let's go somewhere and get one. Where are you stopping?"

"The Van Wouter."

"We might get one there. It's only a few blocks. Gee! I wouldn't have believed it!"

He continued to gasp his amazement in staccato sentences as they walked along, while during his pauses Buck interpolated phrases of agreement to the general effect that you never could tell, and some things were mighty funny, and there were more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than e'er were dreamed of in your philosophy, as the feller said. They had reached the canopied entrance of the Van Wouter and were on the point of turning in when a voice called: "Oh, Mr. Woodbury! Just a minute!"

A tall young man came hurrying to-

ward them. On his face was an expression of anxiety mingled with relief. "You're just the man I want to see!" he exclaimed. "Can you give me a minute—in a hurry? It's important!"

He was a well-dressed young man, although his clothes were of the kind one sees advertised as looking exactly like tailored suits, rather than actually tailored. His hat was a modish straw. He wore white hose and natty tan shoes. Perhaps the most noticeable features about him were his ears, which were of generous dimensions and stuck out at right angles to his head, and his lips, which gave the cursory observer the impression that there had been a little too much material on hand when they were made and that it was easier at the moment to utilize all the fabric than to trim them down and refit them.

With him, but now loitering modestly and somewhat uncertainly in the background, was an old man, perhaps seventy years of age, whose black clothes looked out of place in New York on this warm August afternoon. His hair was white, his eyes were blue, and the expression on his face was one of infinite goodness and whole-souled benevolence.

The young man spoke rapidly to Woodbury, as that dapper person halted. His voice, not loud enough to be heard by the old man, was plainly audible to Buck.

"I gotta chance for a quick killin'," he said. "It won't wait. And I thought maybe I'd find you or one of the other live fellers from down the Street up here at the Van Wouter. Let's get together where we can talk it over—quick!"

Mr. Woodbury gave no sign of being tremendously impressed. "What kind of a killin'?" he asked.

"Stop that noise!" scoffed the younger man. "When we know what kind of a deal we can make, you get the details."

"Nothin' doin', Hayden," replied Woodbury. "I haven't got time to talk about buying things sight unseen."

The young man hesitated, then made up his mind. "Listen!" he said. "I'll just mention the name of the stock. You can guess the possibilities for yourself. It's Tran. Ship."

"Tran. Ship.," repeated the other. "Why, that's as inactive as——" He stopped suddenly, as a thought rolled in on his consciousness. "Excuse me," he said, and stepped to Buck's side, drawing him back to the building wall out of young Mr. Hayden's hearing. "Did you hear what he said?" he asked eagerly.

"Couldn't help it, natchully," admitted Buck.

"Gee! Did you notice what stock he mentioned?"

"Me, I don't know anything to speak of about stocks. Tran. Ship. don't mean anything a-tall to me."

"By gracious, it *can't* be a coincidence! Don't you know what she just said? About a 'T' and an 'S' and a 'Company?' 'Tran. Ship.' is the abbreviation in the Street for the Transoceanic Shipbuilding Company. We're together on this. I'm going to listen to what this fellow says, and you can hear it, too."

He moved off toward the young man without waiting for a reply. During this hurried aside, Mr. Hayden had turned back a few steps and rejoined the elderly man in black, to whom he was now talking earnestly. The ancient replied as though somewhat confused. Hayden seemed to be urging him, and he seemed to be holding back. At last he appeared to assent to some proposition, although reluctantly, and the youth with the outstanding ears left him and again approached Buck and Broker Woodbury.

"Mr. Hayden," said Woodbury at once, "I'll make you acquainted with Colonel Lennon, of Texas."

"Leonard," corrected Buck.

"Excuse me. Colonel Leonard. Colonel, this is Mr. Harry Hayden, of the *Financial Statist*—newspaper down in Wall Street, you know."

They acknowledged the introduction, each after the manner of his normal habit. Woodbury went on without pause: "Mr. Hayden, being in the newspaper business that way, hears of

business opportunities now and then. He says he has one now. Let's hear it, Hayden."

The journalist looked uneasily and significantly over his shoulder. "Not where he can see us talkin'."

"Who is he?" asked Woodbury, apparently taking the old man in black into his full consciousness for the first time.

"That's part of the story," replied Hayden. "If we could get together alone somewhere—— We can't go downtown to your office—the old man won't wait; he's gettin' impatient already."

Woodbury considered this. "We must get a room here for a little talk," he suddenly suggested.

Buck broke in: "We could come up to my room, if that would be convenient. It's a comfortable place to talk—far enough up in the air to get the breeze—and we could get that little drink we were discussin' at the same time. Glad to have you go up to it. And bring your friend," he added to Hayden.

"No," objected the young man hastily. "That wouldn't do. We've got to talk without him present. I'll stow him away in a chair in the lobby and tell him we won't be long. We'll have to hurry, at that," he said apprehensively. "He's gettin' nervous as a cat."

Again Mr. Hayden talked to the old gentleman, and again the old gentleman seemed to hold back. He finally assented, again with evident reluctance, to whatever proposal the young man made, and Mr. Hayden conducted him through the door; as the others followed they saw him, to use his own parlance, "stow" the venerable person in an inconspicuous chair in a corner of the lobby.

"We gotta get busy," said Hayden anxiously, as he rejoined Buck and the broker. "He wants to go home."

Buck led the way to an elevator, and they followed to his room. When he had waved them to seats and ordered refreshments, which proceeding evoked signs of impatience from Hayden, he divested himself of his coat and took a chair.

"Now!" said Woodbury to the representative of the *Financial Statist.* "Let's hear it."

"It's a chance for a nice, quick little clean-up," Hayden declared. "But it needs money—like all clean-ups do. It needs eight thousand dollars, and there's a profit of seven thousand. I know it!"

"All right. Let's hear the rest of it."

"My bit is one thousand. *That's* the rest of it—for the present."

"How quick a turn?"

"Immediate. At once. An hour or two. But it's gotta be done this afternoon."

"How much will you put in yourself?"

"Say! Cut the comedy! What chance has a man in my job to make enough to go into a good thing himself? You know better!"

Woodbury spoke with resolution. "I won't go into any scheme whatever," he said, "that the man that puts it up to me hasn't got enough confidence in to back it with his own money."

"Where would I get it?"

"You've got a little. I heard of your getting six hundred only last month from Schuyler, Bates & Epstein for the tip you gave them on Atlantic Steel."

"Yes, and that was the first bit I'd got in three months, and most of it is gone."

"You've got some."

"Oh, I might be able to dig up two or three hundred dollars. But this calls for eight thousand."

The broker turned to Buck. "What do you say, colonel? If he can make good on what he says, shall we let him have a thousand out of our profits, in addition to what he makes on his own three hundred?"

"I wasn't plannin' to be in on it a-tall," replied Buck gently. "But I don't mind listenin' to any man's game—and if I *should* go in on it, that doesn't sound like a big dealer's percentage."

"Of course I don't know that I want to go in on it, either," said Woodbury.

"But we might as well hear it. Go ahead!" he told Hayden.

"I put in three hundred, you put in seventy-seven hundred, I get the profits on my three hundred and a thousand of yours, and if you don't follow it up after I tell you, you both agree to keep it strictly and positively under your hats," recapitulated the youth rapidly.

"You have my word," assented the broker. And Buck added: "Fair enough. I'll trail along."

The young man became a concentrated talking machine:

"Listen! I gotta tell this quick, because his reverence downstairs might get tired waitin' and beat it. He is a Baptist minister, from up in a little town in Connecticut. Name is Reverend Thomas W. Edwards, D. D. He's the guy that's got the stock. Eighty shares of Tran. Ship. Common. He's got it right with him, buttoned up in his inside pocket.

"When we drew for vacations down in the office, this summer, I had rotten luck and drew the first two weeks in June. At least I thought it was rotten luck then. Maybe it was good luck, the way it looks now. So I went off on my vacation to this place Holdensburg, Connecticut, where I'd heard the restin' was good, and naturally, my folks bein' Baptists, I went to hear this old feller preach, and sort of came to know him."

Buck's acquaintanceship with young Mr. Hayden was not sufficient for him to consider it strange that the youth should go to church, although at first sight he did not impress one as a deeply religious person, but that his family should have been Baptists might have astonished an observant person, the contour of his face being quite distinctly Semitic. If this thought flashed across Buck's mind, however, there was no indication of it in his face. The young man was running on rapidly:

"So, to make a long story short, he happens to tell me about these here eighty shares of Tran. Ship. that he's had a good many years. Cost him about fifty, as I remember it, and lately hasn't been worth more than eighteen. Not listed, you know. He's always made up his mind to hold onto the stuff, he says, until it gets to be worth par, and he's such a nice old gink I don't break it to him that there's small chance—small chance!

"Then yesterday something happens. I'm scoutin' around down in the Street, and I get an underground to the effect that there's somethin' doin' in Tran. Ship. So I nose into it, and I get wise that the British government has been tryin' to buy up control of the company, with the idea of takin' its coastwise ships—a lot of old junk that wasn't worth a hoot before the war—and puttin' 'em into the munition-carryin' trade. But at closin' time last night they're just sixty shares short of control, and there don't seem to be any way they can get it before five o'clock this afternoon—I told you they had to have it before five o'clock this afternoon, didn't I?"

"No," said Woodbury. "Why?"

"There's a meetin' of the executive committee of the company at that time, and if they ain't ready to take control the committee is goin' to pass some resolutions that will commit the company to the South American trade instead of the European.

"Well, when I find out all this, I remember old Reverend Edwards and his little bunch of Tran. Ship. So I go down to the British consulate and see this Hilary Vane—he's the consul general, you know. And I tell him maybe I can get him eighty shares for a sufficient consideration, and we dicker back and forth, and finally he agrees to take the eighty and pay fifteen thousand dollars cash if they're delivered before four o'clock this afternoon."

Broker Woodbury pulled out his watch and returned it to his pocket with one brisk movement. "It's two-ten now," he commented.

"Then I get the Reverend Edwards on the long distance," Hayden went on, "and tell him to come to New York in a hurry and bring his stock. But he's old and poky, and he only just gets in. I meet him at the Grand Central and head right over here, hopin' to find somebody from the Street hangin' out

here, to save the time of goin' downtown, and just as we're comin' to the hotel I run into you."

A moment of silence followed.

"No use talking to the old man until we know for sure about the market for it," Woodbury said, with finality. "Have you got any writing from the consul?"

"No; he wouldn't give me any. That's all right; he couldn't afford to have any evidence in writin' that would commit his government, of course. Neutrality laws and so forth."

The broker shook his head emphatically. "I wouldn't move a step unless I had a definite assurance from him. Would you, colonel?"

"Of course," said Buck diffidently. "I don't know Mr. Hayden so well as you do. *I'd* want some guarantee."

"Oh, Hayden's all right," commented Woodbury, without regard for that young man's feelings, "but I wouldn't take his word nor anybody else's for a matter that involved eight thousand dollars."

The financial journalist solved this difficulty. "Here!" he exclaimed. "Let me use the telephone. You can talk to him yourself."

He consulted a little notebook from a waiscoat pocket. "Vane's phone isn't listed in the telephone directory," he explained. He stepped to the instrument and called a number. After a moment he said:

"Is this the consulate? I want to speak to Mr. Vane, please. . . . Mr. Hayden. . . . Hayden. H-a-y-d-e-n —of the *Financial Statist.*" A moment's wait followed. "Hello! Is this Mr. Vane? This is Mr. Hayden. . . . Yes. Regarding that matter we discussed last evening, I think I have got hold of that security for you. The man who holds the stock wants to be certain of your offer. . . . Certainly, but he doesn't know me very well; he isn't entirely willing to take my word. Quite natural. Would you mind, Mr. Vane, repeating to him the offer you made me? . . . Thank you."

He turned and held the receiver toward Woodbury, who moved to rise, then nodded in Buck's direction. "You take the message, colonel," he said. "I'll be satisfied if you are."

"Hello!" called Buck into the transmitter. A well-modulated, unquestionably English voice replied:

"Ah you theah? Who ah you?"

"My name is Leonard."

"You ah Mr. Hayden's principal in the—ah—mattah of certain securities?"

"Yes, suh."

"He desahs me to repeat my offah. I will give you fifteen thousand dollahs for eighty shahs of the common stock, if they are delivered befaw faw to-day —an' not a minute latah."

"Common stock of what company?" asked Buck.

"Why, Transoceanic Shipbuilding, of cawse. Not a minute aftah faw, you understand. I shall not be held by this offah a moment latah. Ah you theah?"

"Yes, suh."

"Is theah anything else?"

"Why, no, not that I think of. Oh, yes! Just so's there won't be any mistake—who is this talkin'?"

"Damme, is this a cross-examination? Chahles Hilary Vane, of cawse—at the British consulate."

"Thank y' kindly, suh," said Buck. "We'll let you know." He hung up and faced the others. "Sounds fair enough," he admitted.

"Did he make the same offer that he did to Hayden?" Woodbury asked eagerly.

"Fifteen thousand for eighty shares —before four."

The broker spoke with decision: "Better have the old minister up, hadn't we?" As Buck nodded, Hayden hastened from the room, returning within five minutes with the old gentleman.

The Reverend Doctor Edwards wore square-toed, black shoes, well polished, and black broadcloth trousers and waistcoat. He had conceded something to the heat of summer by substituting for the black frock coat that he undoubtedly usually wore a black alpaca jacket. A narrow white lawn bow was squarely tied at the front of his slightly frayed, turndown collar, and he was perhaps the only man in all New York

that warm summer day who wore an old-fashioned white shirt with a hard-boiled bosom. Following the brisk introductions by Hayden, he sat down on the edge of a chair, his straw hat held nervously in his hands, and blinked amiably from one to the other. The luxury of the well-appointed hotel evidently awed him somewhat.

"I've been talkin' the proposition over with these gentlemen," Hayden said at once, "and perhaps they can see their way clear to buyin' your stock. They want to talk to you a little about it."

The old gentleman looked a trifle startled. "Why, I thought from your telephone message it was all settled," he said, in a soft, timid voice. "I understood you to say you had found a purchaser."

"I said I *thought* I had found one," corrected the journalist. "And prob'ly I have. They want to see the stock, and they want to know the price."

"Dear me! I thought *that* was all settled, too," the minister fussed. "I told you I would sell it for one hundred dollars a share. That is the par value—what it says on the certificate," he explained to Buck and the broker.

"I don't believe we could give more than ninety," remarked Woodbury.

The minister rose, looking about him. "I misunderstood the young man," he said, with dignity. "I have no desire to sell at any less than one hundred dollars. I have always said I would hold it until it reached that price. You see," he explained, "I bought it quite a number of years ago, out of a little legacy that was left me by an old member of the church which I then served. It appealed to me. My father was a ship carpenter. I was born, gentlemen, in Wiscasset, Maine. Wiscasset was considerable of a shipbuilding community in those days. That is why, when I had a little money to invest, I placed it in the stock of a shipbuilding company. There was a matter of sentiment. I hoped I should receive dividends from it, or perhaps sell it in time to provide for my declining years." He blinked and turned toward the door. "It has been quite disappointing," he said simply.

"Hold on!" said Woodbury. "Don't be in such a hurry! Perhaps—I don't know—we might see our way clear to paying par. You might let us see the certificates, anyway."

"There is only one certificate," the old man said. He took from an inner pocket an old wallet and opened it. "It is for eighty shares. See? 'Of a par value of one hundred dollars.' I paid four thousand dollars for it. Years ago. If I had put the four thousand dollars out at interest——"

Woodbury took the certificate and looked at the back; then passed it to Buck. It was issued to Thomas W. Edwards, and was indorsed by him in blank in an old, crabbed hand. Buck handed it back in silence, and Woodbury turned again to the minister.

"You know Mr. Hayden, here, quite well, don't you?"

"Indeed. Quite well. He and I became quite well acquainted last month—or was it the month before last? Time passes so quickly."

"Would you let him have the handling of that stock for you? Let him take the certificate, and if we buy it he will give you the eight thousand dollars when we pay it—say right after the banks open to-morrow."

The old man restored the certificate to his wallet with hands that trembled. "Dear me!" he quavered. "Oh, no! I couldn't think of it. I think——" He smiled tremulously. "It is quite exciting for me here in the city of New York," he apologized. "I haven't been here before for many, many years. I—I think I will be going. Yes, I think I will have to be getting back home. I guess I did not understand. I thought the matter was all arranged."

"Listen, doctor!" said Hayden. "You go back downstairs where you was sittin' just now when I come for you, and wait a little, will you? I want to talk to these gentlemen. I think we can fix it. Will you wait?"

The old minister looked from one to the other uncertainly. He was plainly

confused; perhaps almost ill from nervousness. "How long?" he asked.

"Just a few moments. I'll be right down."

"For a few moments, then." His feebleness was very evident as he left the room, and his honest blue eyes bore a troubld look. "My daughter," he murmured, "will expect me home. It was quite a journey."

No sooner was the door closed behind him than Hayden faced the others, sharp, insistent.

"Do we or don't we?" he demanded. "You see the shape he's in. He'll be beatin' it the first thing we know."

Woodbury turned to Buck. "What do *you* think?"

"I've still got an open mind."

The broker pondered for five seconds only. "Of course, what we'd like to do would be to get the stock, sell it, and then pay him his," he said, "but he won't stand for it. I don't see that we are taking any chance."

"It don't look so," admitted Buck.

"All right. Here's what I'm willing to do: "I'll take four thousand of the eight. Hayden's willing to put in three hundred. You take thirty-seven hundred." He pulled a check book from his pocket with a businesslike air of decision. "Shall we do it?"

"Sounds all right. Why—er—yes."

"*You'll* be putting in cash," said Woodbury coldly to the financial journalist. "Kick in! Give it to Colonel Leonard. He'll be the treasurer."

"What d'ya mean cash?"

"Cash! C-a-s-h! Money! Time's too short to waste with smooth words. You know my check's good, but I don't know yours is."

Hayden for a second looked angry, then laughed shortly. "And you could positively bet your life it ain't," he remarked. "I haven't got any bank account, but I'll start one with the thousand you fellers are goin' to give me and the two hundred and odd I make out of my own interest. Just now I'm my own little safe-deposit vault."

Into an inner pocket he went and brought forth a roll of bank notes. When he had carefully counted off three hundred dollars, there seemed to be about thirty or forty dollars left, which he carefully returned to the inside of the waistcoat. The three hundred was in fives, tens, and twenties. He tossed it in front of Buck, who counted it.

"Three hundred—correct!" said Leonard, and let it remain where it lay, awaiting developments.

Woodbury, as soon as Hayden produced his share of the funds, began to adjust a fountain pen. "Who had I better make this payable to?" he asked, poising it. "T. H. Edwards?"

Hayden thought briefly. "I bet the old guy'd make a kick at that," he said. "He's all haired up and unreasonable. Perhaps he couldn't get identified—and you haven't got time to take him down to the bank and identify him. Why not make it to 'Bearer?'"

The broker nodded agreement and drew his check for four thousand dollars, signing it with a flourish. "Want to use this pen?" he asked of Buck. And at the same moment he laid his own check on top of the little pile of currency.

"Why, yes, thank y' kindly, suh," agreed Buck. He crossed the room to his hand bag and came back with three or four loose checks of the First National Bank of Mendon, Texas. He made one of these out to "Bearer" for three thousand seven hundred dollars, and signed his name—"Buckley J. Leonard."

It was at this moment that the financial journalist made a protest.

"Look here!" he exclaimed, picking up Buck's check from the table. "This won't do! The old gentleman will holler like blazes at gettin' a check on a Texas bank that he don't know anything about."

This seemingly caused doubts to arise in Woodbury's mind as well. "I didn't think of that," he said. "For that matter——" His voice was as cold as when he had demanded that Hayden put up his share in real money. "For that matter, I don't know that your check *is* good. Come to think of it, we don't know each other very well."

"What kind of a bank is the National Community Bank?" asked Buck quietly.

"One of the biggest in the city, of course."

"Do either of you happen to know the cashier's name?"

"I do," said Woodbury. "It's Roland K. Chace."

Buck waved a hand toward the telephone. "You call up the National Community," he said, "and get Mr. Chace to come to the phone. He'll come if you tell him I want to talk to him. When you're sure you've got him, I'll talk."

The broker looked quickly at Hayden, who nodded almost imperceptibly. Three or four minutes later, Woodbury turned from the instrument and said:

"Here he is."

Buck had been fingering Woodbury's check and Hayden's currency as he sat waiting. He still had them absent-mindedly between his fingers as he went to the telephone.

"Sorry to bother you, Mr. Chace," he said, "but this is Leonard—Colonel Buck Leonard, of Mendon, Texas. . . . Very well, thank y', and how are you, suh? . . . Heard when Mr. Vanderpool is going to get back to town, yet? . . . Well, that's shorely disappointin', but I hope the trip does him lots of good. Say, Mr. Chace, I want you to tell a man that's standin' here side of me whether you'd cash a bearer check for, say, five or ten thousand dollars if I gave it to him. Check on my bank in Mendon, of course. You know my signature. . . . All right. Thank y' very kindly, suh. Wait a minute."

He passed the receiver to Woodbury, who said. "Hello! Who is this?"

"Mr. Chace still talking," came the reply. "Did you hear Colonel Leonard ask me a question?"

"Yes, sir."

"Colonel Leonard is good at this bank for any check that bears his signature," said the cashier.

"Thank you very much," replied the broker.

"*That's* all right," he said briskly, turning from the telephone and looking at his watch. "Now let's see what we'll do. We'll get the old man up here again and get his stock in a hurry. He won't delay us much, I guess, because we can point out to him that it is almost bank-closing time, and if he don't hurry he can't get the cash and get home to-night. I imagine"—this to Hayden—"you'll have to go with him to help him cash in; he's greener than grass to the ways of New York. Then, while you're about that, the colonel and I will deliver the stock to Vane and get——"

The telephone, ringing, broke into this statement of plans. Buck answered it and turned to Hayden. "Some one wants to speak to you, suh," he said. "Sounds like the old gentleman."

"Hello!" called Hayden. "Yes. . . . I'll be right down in just a few minutes, doctor. . . . What! No, don't do that! . . . *No!* Here! *Listen!*"

The financial journalist turned from the transmitter in something of a panic. "The old fool's beatin' it!" he exclaimed. "Says he can't stand it any longer and has got to go. He's hung up on me."

"He mustn't go! You've gotta stop him!" exclaimed Woodbury.

Hayden crossed the room in two leaps and got his hat. "I'll get him!" he cried, as he dashed through the door. "I'll bring him back!" The check for three thousand seven hundred dollars, payable to bearer and signed "Buckley J. Leonard," was still unconsciously clutched in his hand.

"Gee!" exclaimed Woodbury. "It would be a deuce of a note if he didn't catch the old guy, wouldn't it?"

Several minutes had passed when Mr. Woodbury began to show signs of impatience. "I hope the old man didn't get away from him," he said uneasily. "Maybe Hayden wouldn't think, if he didn't see him right away, to go toward the Grand Central." He walked about the room. "I wonder if I hadn't better go out and see if I can't find him," he finally said. At that moment came a sharp knocking at the door of the room. "Come in!" called Buck. "Hello, Mr. Kelly!" he said cordially, as the door opened. "Come in and visit."

Mr. Kelly, the house detective, did

not look like one unless you happened to notice his feet. Just now he looked like a quietly dressed, red-faced, stout man, laboring under some excitement.

"Say!" he began. "Did you——" He caught sight of Mr. Woodbury and stopped. "I didn't know you had a caller. Can I see you a minute?"

"I was just going, anyway," put in the broker, with alacrity.

"Oh, don't go," drawled Buck, and there was some note in his voice that made the little, well-dressed man hesitate. "You'll enjoy meetin' up with Mr. Kelly. Sit down." Obviously ill at ease, the broker obeyed, taking a chair, however, in the darkest corner of the room.

"Mr. Kelly," said Buck, "shake hands with Mr.—well, don't that beat all!" He got the broker's card out of a pocket and squinted at it. "Mr. Woodbury," he supplied, "of the brokerage firm of Emmett & Woodbury; no address given."

The detective was plainly puzzled. "Can I talk before him?" he asked.

"You can if you ain't got no impediment in your speech. Go to it! Shoot!"

Mr. Kelly remained standing—near the door. "Did a couple of guys leave this room a few minutes ago?" he asked. "An old guy wit' a minister make-up, and a Yid wit' big ears and a loose face?"

"There were two such gentlemen here," replied Buck courteously. "One of 'em was a friend of Mr. Woodbury. Mr. Woodbury he was just thinkin' of goin' to look for 'em when you came in."

Mr. Kelly still looked slightly nonplused.

"Well, it's this way," he said. "They's a dance down in the gold room this afternoon, and I'm on duty, watchin' that nobody pinches any of the old girls' jools. And after a while my runnin' mate comes in to relieve me and I step out to get a breath of air that ain't got roses and vi'lets and sasshay in it, and stand talkin' with Regan—he's the carriage starter—when who comes out of the house, hurryin', but Parson Matthews and Loose-lip Izzy Hyman, and a finer pair of come-on artists ain't doin' business in this burg. They grab a taxi, and Loose Lip says: 'National Community Bank—in a hurry!' And they beat it hellity-larrup for downtown. So I hustle into the house to see have they made a touch or somethin', and when I start callin' the floor desks to see where they come from, the goil on this floor says parties answerin' that description have come outa this room. Say! They didn't touch you for anything, did they?"

"They got a little check," said Buck calmly.

"They did? How much?"

"Why, it was—— How much was that check, Mr. Woodbury? Was your check the one for four thousand, or mine? Oh, excuse me; I've got yours." While Detective Kelly looked on with unconcealed astonishment, and the broker eyed him with almost as unconcealed uneasiness, Buck dug down into his pocket and brought up Woodbury's check and three hundred dollars in bills. "Mine was for thirty-seven hundred," he informed the detective.

"Really," exclaimed Mr. Woodbury, rising, "I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me. I've just remembered——"

"You stay where you are until we straighten this out!" commanded Mr. Kelly. "What talk is this about a thirty-seven-hundred check? Glory be, man! Don't you realize they're beatin' it for the bank as fast as ever they can to cash it? How did they get it?"

Very sketchily Buck reviewed the events of the afternoon, beginning with his meeting with Mr. Woodbury and approaching the moment when Loose-lip Izzy—alias Hayden—had vanished through the door in urgent search of the Reverend Doctor Edwards. As he came to the incident of the conversation with Cashier Chace at the National Community, Kelly leaped for the telephone.

"We gotta stop that check!" he cried.

"I wouldn't get excited," drawled Buck. "If anybody'll give 'em any money for that check, they're welcome to it."

"But you told this here Chace——"

"I asked him if he would cash a check for five or ten thousand dollars, drawn on my bank, with my signature. Isn't that what I said?" He put the question sharply to Woodbury.

"I—why—yes, I think——"

"Well," Buck went on to Kelly, "*my* bank—the one I'm president of—is the State Bank of Mendon. Chace knows that as well as I do—he was down there shootin', winter before last, with Mr. Vanderpool. The check I wrote was on the Mendon National. Besides, Chace knows my signature—I specially asked him. This signature I give these fellers, pendin' findin' out how they were fixin' to play their game, was signed: 'Buckley J. Leonard.' My check signature is always just 'B. J. Leonard'—and it has some funny curlicues under it, too, that I left out this afternoon. Chace has seen my name on paper for a good many thousand dollars, first and last. No danger of his cashin' that check; no danger a-tall."

He leaned forward toward both of them. "You see," he said confidentially, "it was this-a-way: This Mr. Woodbury he thought the check must be all right, because I signed it just the same as I signed my name on the hotel register when I come in last Tuesday evenin', and he was standin' right side of me when I registered. But I'll leave it to you." He ingenuously appealed to Woodbury. "Wouldn't a banker be a darn fool to have the same signature for hotel registers that he has for checks?"

Mr. Woodbury seemed to be struggling with some great emotion. His thoughts were interrupted by Kelly, who said truculently:

"I don't happen to know your face, feller, but I know this Woodbury ain't your right moniker. We'll let 'em identify you down to headquarters. You're pinched!"

"Now, Mr. Kelly!" Buck spoke softly, persuasively. "If you were to take Mr.—er—Wood-something to the police station, I'd have to stay over to appear against him, wouldn't I? And I was fixin' to start for home to-night. I don't exactly think of any charge I want to make against him. He's shore treated me to a very entertainin' afternoon. I was thinkin' of goin' to a show; it wouldn't have been half so amusin'."

"Well! If you won't appear against him——" reluctantly began Mr. Kelly. He stopped, his eyes glued on Buck, who was silently running over the little wad of bank notes.

"I was thinkin'," said the Texan mildly, "that we ought to give some thought to the proper disposition of this little roll. I wouldn't want to keep it all. It sort of don't seem like honest money, although I won it in a game, as you might say, and I ain't got any especial prejudice against gamblin' in a small, friendly way. So I was thinkin' maybe we'd divide it."

He picked out a five-dollar bill and pocketed it. "That's for me," he said, "to pay for the séance with Eye-ester." He peeled off a twenty and passed it to Kelly, who accepted and disposed of it mechanically with one expert motion. "And that's for you, for your prompt interest and trouble.

"And the rest of this wad—this two hundred and seventy-five dollars—why, the only thing I can see to do with this is to give it to its nachural and proper owners."

Kelly exploded: "You don't mean you're goin' to let that gang of crooks ——" But Buck went on, without noticing the interruption.

"This here Hayden-Hyman feller," he said, "handed it to me to invest in a War Baby. So I'm going to donate it to the Belgian Children's Relief Fund."

"Are *you* still here?" demanded Kelly, his under jaw projecting, of the dapper Mr. Woodbury. He opened the door. "You beat it!" he snarled. "And keep out of this hotel hereafter if you don't want me to get you!"

Woodbury edged to the door, his too-close eyes glowering venomously at Buck and the little sheaf of bank notes.

"On the level," he exclaimed, "I ought to be thankful to get away from this joint with my watch!" and incontinently fled.

Cæsar's Meat

By Holman Day

Author of "The Red Lane," "The Forty-Ninth Talesman," Etc.

"I have dined—the world's all right." You'd believe it if you had eaten a two-hundred-dollar dinner, as did the man in this inimitable story—a stolen dinner, but there was abundance of excuse for the theft. Nothing in his life had been so important as that feast; it altered the whole course of his existence. You will be more than mildly amused by Holman Day's delectable recital of the metamorphosis of this man who dined well.

AS exotic as a butterfly among tumblebugs, came Colonel Rodburd Oral Presson, riding down the middle of the main street of Avon.

He was on his way from his new estate, Broadview Towers, to his office.

Items of equipage: tightly checked, rigid-necked bay horses—"gents drivers"—with high knee action, flashing and clashing brass flapdingles on the harness, driver in purple livery, brougham upholstered in purple. Colonel Presson sat as straight as a cob under his shiny plug hat; his corn-silk, mutton-chop whiskers stuck out assertively and matched in color his tight gloves, and his owllike dignity was emphasized by tortoise-rimmed spectacles.

He passed muddy wagons of farmer folk, and the meek dobbins drooped apologetic heads and took to the sides of the street.

He stepped down in front of the new Davis Block, where a branspang new sign heralded: "Rodburd Oral Presson, Office." He entered and framed himself in a glistening, plate-glass window while he pulled off his gloves.

Across the street, upstairs, in a sagging old building, Squire Fillmore Drake stood at his dusty window and gazed on this opulence. The sign under the window on the stained clapboarding announced: "F. Drake. Oaths Administered. Wills and Pension Vouchers Executed." Mr. Drake matched his surroundings; he was elderly and sagging, too, and his old frock suit was dusty and stained. He sighed and he muttered while he stared across the street, and then he put on his fuzzy plug hat and adventured forth.

He went straight to the presence of Colonel Presson and made known his name and his calling.

"And it's this way, sir! You don't realize, being a stranger in town——"

"A stranger? I a stranger?" demanded the colonel.

"Well, I mean that you have come in here recently and settled, and you probably don't know that I have depended on my notary-public jobs for my living. You are letting them do their swearing for nothing and——"

"What is your charge for administering an oath?"

"Twenty-five cents."

"Do you think I would condescend to take twenty-five cents from a person for such service?"

"Probably not," admitted the old man. He looked at Colonel Presson and surveyed the sumptuous interior while his hand, in his trousers pocket,

dribbled three pennies over and over through his fingers.

"Certainly not! I secured my appointment as notary public merely that I might study municipal affairs at closer range, get in touch with people; and I serve them free in order that they may be attracted to my office. It may be said to be a little fad of mine."

"It isn't any fad with me, sir," said Squire Drake, fingering his cash capital. "It's my living."

"Nonsense! You couldn't exist on those paltry fees."

"I am an old bach—I sleep on my office sofa and cook for myself in a back room. I was getting along all right until you came here. I am willing to divide business with you if you'll charge fees. I'll take my chances. But you know what country folks are—they'll all flock to you if you do it free."

"I need the acquaintance and good will of the people to further certain large plans of mine. I cannot allow petty matters to interfere. I shall not charge fees."

"Then what is to become of me?"

"Expand into some other branch of activity," advised the colonel, settling his white waistcoat over his rotund paunch. "Let me tell you something! Now that I have made my fortune, my mission, so I believe, has been revealed to me. Too many men are not making the most of themselves. They are in ruts. Some men are in ruts of crime—some are in ruts of plain, common laziness. I propose to increase the general efficiency of the world. It is a grand object. It is plain to be seen that you are not making the most of yourself. I am doing you a true service by shaking you up. Now, grow, Mr. Drake, grow!"

Colonel Presson straightened and beat a plump fist upon his ample chest.

"I can't do much growing on the grub I've had to put up with," stated Squire Drake. "But at my age I am contented if I can be let alone. I ask you again to keep hands off my little business. I don't want to be shaken up—not at my age."

"Ah, but you will grow young again—you will live longer if you are shaken into activity—it's a sound principle of my philosophy. I was in a rut once myself. I was poor. Then I shook myself up. You see!" The colonel fluffed his side whiskers and then threw out his arms to invite inspection.

"Yes, I see," acknowledged Mr. Drake sullenly. "How did you make your money? Nobody around here seems to know."

Two little dabs of color appeared on Colonel Presson's cheeks.

"It is not necessary for them to know. Do you propose to be impertinent because I am giving you good advice and a boost upward?"

"If I knew how you made your money I might be able to do the same thing after I have been shaken."

"I do not think my experience will help you," stated the colonel, who had lost considerable of his blandly patronizing manner.

"It must have been something good," persisted the old man. "It isn't every stranger who can come into a State, as you have done, and buy three farms and hitch 'em together into an estate and build a mansion and dump a thousand dollars into the campaign fund so as to be picked out for a colonel on the governor's staff."

"Such remarks are not in good taste, sir!"

"Perhaps not—and then, again, they may be just as polite as running free competition and taking away a man's sole means of livelihood."

"That's sufficient, Mr. Drake! You will come back to thank me for having lifted you into the ranks of efficiency. Now, is there anything else I can do for you?" The tone suggested chilly dismissal.

"I hope not—not in the same line," retorted Squire Drake.

"Ah, already you are showing spirit. Keep on! Grow, sir!"

The old man clumped down the stairs and went back to his own office. Through his dusty windows he saw many clients coming and going in the

office across the way. Many of them held up hands, taking oaths.

"Half of 'em at a shilling apiece would have made a good day's work for me," growled the squire. "Grow! That's his advice. And I gnawed a cheese rind for breakfast and ate half a cracker."

He went into the back room and opened tin boxes, one after the other, hoping that some fragments of food might have escaped his attention. He found nothing.

"Hornpouts for my dinner—hornpouts again!" he sighed, addressing himself in a cracked mirror. "Always hornpouts!" He twisted his sparse beard into spills. "I have eat so many of them that I've grown to look like a hornpout. Brain food, fish is. Maybe so. There's nothing much the matter with my brains, but there's something wrong with my grip and my grit. If there wasn't, I would have grabbed him by those pussy-willow whiskers and shown him that there's more than one way of shaking a man up."

He walked back into his bare office and cast discouraged gaze on his few belongings. On the shelves of a bookcase were numerous volumes sheathed in brown-paper covers and labeled in the squire's cramped handwriting as "Acts and Resolves, Vol. I.," "Vol. II.," et cetera.

"There may be one real law book among 'em—one I have overlooked," he mused. But he found only useless rubbish from the government printing office—reports which congressmen industriously frank to the four corners of the country. In their smug masquerade as law books they seemed to be greater cheats than ever.

"I reckon it will have to be 'Rise up, Willy Shakespeare, and come along with me,'" said the squire, and he laid hands on the only book on his table. He took it to the window and thumbed it rapidly to be sure that no letters or papers were left in it. A passage caught his eye, and he paused and read aloud, holding the book so that the wan light through the dirty window might assist his eyes:

"Upon what meat doth this, our Cæsar, feed
That he is grown so great?"

Then he looked across the way. Colonel Presson, with hands behind him, was pacing in pompous and satisfied state to and fro athwart the plate-glass window, picture of prosperity on exhibit.

"If there is all they say there is in this diet matter, I cannot recommend hornpouts out of my personal experience," pondered Mr. Drake. "I have just found out that I have grown to look like one; I am about willing to own up that I feel like one. Willing to lie on the mud at the edge of the big pond and wait to have the brook bring my grub down to me. Ho, hum! Well, I've got to have something for dinner."

Into a tattered bag of green baize he tossed a fishline wound on a spool. He put the volume of Shakespeare in tenderly—regretfully. "Good-by, Willum! But, after all, it is not alone the presence of a dear friend which delights—the memories of him are even dearer joys."

Grocer Tryon wiped his hands on his apron and accepted the book across the counter.

"It isn't law?" he suggested, after he had opened it.

"No, it's Shakespeare."

"Looks like po'try."

"It is—grand poetry."

Grocer Tryon looked doubtful and laid the book on the counter.

"Don't believe there's any market for it. Son-in-law says so. If you've got any more law I'll take it, because he can peddle it."

"I haven't any more law books. But there is great interest in Shakespeare because this year is the three hundredth anniversary——"

"Good Sancho! You don't expect folks to take any interest in a critter who has been on and off the earth as long ago as that, do you?"

"But he is——" blurted the squire, then he gazed at Tryon's mottled face and squint eyes and sighed. "No matter! But if you'll allow a dollar for it in trade, I'll take pilot bread, cheese, and salt pork."

"I'll trust you," volunteered the grocer, remembering past profits and touched by the old man's meekness.

"I never ask credit, Tryon. It has always been a matter of principle with me."

Tryon pulled the book back across the counter.

"I don't know just what I can do with writings so much out of date, but I'll try to make myself square somehow. I'll wrap up the stuff—will pound for pound suit, as usual?"

"Yes," said Mr. Drake. "I'll call on my way back to the office."

He plodded away down the long main street, and after he had left the village he climbed a fence and crossed a field. When he came to plowed ground he paused and kicked at the furrows turned by the autumn tillage and dislodged earthworms which he picked up and dropped into his waistcoat pocket.

A mill pond bordered the field, and he trudged on, thrust himself through the alders, pulled a warped bamboo pole from its hiding place in a hollow log, sat down upon the log, and attached his line.

"Hornpouts!" he said aloud, as he swung out his baited hook and dropped it into the water. "It's lucky for me that most folks don't relish 'em. I look like one—I begin to feel like one. The Lord Gull, the shaker up, is right, I suppose—I am in a rut. I don't feel like getting out. But I wonder what Cæsar himself would have done on a steady diet of hornpouts."

The rod sagged lazily, and as lazily the squire lifted a fish from the pond. It pendulumed toward him, writhing sluggishly, and he set fingers carefully around its bristling horns and removed the hook. He dropped the captive into the green bag and again cast his hook.

His "mess" was six—three for his dinner, two for his chowder supper, and one for breakfast. When he had the six, he pulled the puckering string of the green bag, hid the pole, and rewound his line on the spool. He saw the glint of the vanes on Broadview Towers when he walked back across the field.

"Upon what meat doth this, our Cæsar, feed
That he is grown so great?"

He had been repeating that phrase over and over at intervals ever since his eyes had fallen on the page. He swung off his regular route and passed close to the freshly white palisades of Colonel Presson's spacious farmyard. Portly, white-faced Herefords lumbered about, cropping the grass. There were other varieties of cattle, Belted Dutch, gentle Jerseys whose udders promised richness of butter and cream even as the broad flanks of the Herefords suggested thick and juicy steaks. Down in the orchard, fat pigs snouted at the roots of the trees and gobbled windfalls. There were flocks of cackling hens and processions of waddling ducks.

"If he had given me one of those hens along with his good advice, I would have accepted both in a more or less thankful spirit," pondered the squire. "Advice costs nothing, and he would never miss the hen."

He halted and stared long at the parade of prosperity and at the ambulatory provender within the palings.

"He would never miss the hen," he said aloud.

No caretakers were in sight; the flocks and herds were unattended.

"I would not pick a sleepy hen off a roost in the night. That would be cheap theft. But—let us consider this from the standpoint of sportsmanship, cruel necessity, and a desire to obey his admonition to 'grow,' now that he has shaken me up. There may be justification."

He got out his fishline, found a languid worm in his vest pocket, and baited the hook. He looped a pebble into the line, unrolled all from the spool, and flung the pebble over the palings. A cock whose neck ruff was ablaze with prismatic colors was poising himself, ready to crow, when the worm fell in front of him. He suppressed the crow and tiptoed toward the object, his head on one side.

"He will plut-plut and call a hen, providing he's a gentleman," reflected the squire. "All I want is one plain hen. And rooster is liable to be tough."

When the cock bent over the worm without sounding his call of invitation, the squire yanked on the line.

"Let that alone! Don't be a hog. I don't want you," called the angler, in guarded tones. But when he yanked again, the cock leaped upon the bait and gulped it.

"You *are* a hog, and you deserve your fate," declared Mr. Drake, and he pulled overhand with all his might. The gobbet and the hook crowded the rooster's throat and rendered him voiceless, and he came fluttering over the palings and into the squire's hands without voicing an alarm.

Mercilessly, and in order to be on the safe side, the captor wrung the fowl's neck and dropped his booty into the green bag; then he went on into the highway.

Colonel Redburd Presson, returning to his mansion for lunch after a soul-satisfying session on the tripod of authority, saw the squire plodding in the dust and halted the brougham. Mr. Drake obeyed the summons of the gloved hand and stood at attention, green bag drooping unobtrusively at his side.

"Circumstances have conspired to remove me into a higher field of activity, sir. It is an unexpected change. I shall be obliged to close my Avon office. I have just received a telegram from Governor Burton, appointing me high sheriff of this county in place of Sheriff Booth, who has been removed for accepting bribes from liquor sellers."

The squire clasped his hands behind his back and held the green bag there.

"Yes, sir!" he said, with meekness. In his heart he was meditating on the matter of the thousand-dollar campaign contribution, and was asking himself when a bribe was not a bribe.

"Therefore, you may resume your notary-public work—but I am sorry because you depend on such paltry business for a livelihood."

"It will not be much of a business after this, colonel."

"Do not coddle narrow spite, Mr. Drake. Grow! Expand! If you display proper efficiency—a real desire to get out of the rut—it may be that in my new and high authority I can do something for you. I shall keep my eye on you. I have wired for a special car to be attached to the three-o'clock train this afternoon. I am inviting the citizens to ride up to the shire with me in order that they may see me take the oath of office. I invite you. All bills are assumed by me. I invite you especially. After our talk to-day, I wish to keep my eye on you, I repeat. You are a man of apparent intelligence—I am curious to note the effect my efficiency methods have on you."

"Thank you," returned the squire. "I'll be glad to go."

"In accepting the high position which has been tendered to me, I have ulterior plans far beyond the mere ministration of the office, sir." He waved his hand with the gesture of the orator, and raised his voice. "I am proud of the honor in itself. It represents the majesty of the law. A sheriff should be the incarnation of law. I shall give up the comforts of Broadview Towers and reside in the sheriff's quarters at the county jail. In this great movement toward prison reform and intelligent uplift of the criminal classes I shall—well, I will not keep you standing longer in the sun, Mr. Drake. I shall cover the ground later to-day in my speech of acceptance, and you will be there to listen. But you already have heard enough to realize what new and high ideals I shall bring to an office which has been lowered and abused by past incumbents. In view of what I have planned, I would as soon be sheriff of Ligonia County as President of the United States."

"So would I, if I had as little conscience as some of those liquor grafters in past years," admitted the squire. "All of 'em have got rich while they've been in office."

Colonel Presson frowned.

"I will show the world how a sheriff

should conduct himself, Mr. Drake. Drive on, Frederick."

And the dust from the autocrat's wheels enshrouded Squire Drake and sifted down upon his bowed shoulders and upon the green bag which held the victim of violence. Then the old man trudged on.

"I'll take butter instead of cheese, if you're willing," he informed Grocer Tryon. He bore his bundles up into his office, and for the first time in many years he locked the door behind him.

"I don't know what the feeling is—whether it's guilt or fear that somebody will want a hunk of this rooster if they catch me eating it. Anyway, I feel better to have that door locked."

He spread old newspapers on the floor, squatted cross-legged in the middle of this islet, and began to pluck the feathers from the warm body. He sighed when he set fingers into the neck ruff and twitched out the radiant feathers.

"It's too bad! You're a beauty. But you forgot to be genteel—you grabbed. I have stayed in a rut all my life because I have been too polite to grab. Perhaps I ought to have grabbed. I don't know! Viewed from the standpoint of philosophy, the matter is open to argument. As my friend, Willum, says"—he raised his eyes to the empty table—"but Willum isn't here. He is merely represented by butter and salt pork. I shall miss his philosophy. However, after I get you into my stomach, I shall have more philosophy in my soul, I expect. Let that serve as consolation."

The squire fried "Mercutio." He gave the victim that name before he had finished stripping off the gaudy feathers. "For you were of high spirit, too impulsive and unfortunate in the manner of your taking off."

He marveled at his capacity for food while he ate, his elbows on the table, gnawing the flesh from the bones. He cleaned those bones to the last drumstick, sucked the wishbone carefully and put it in his coat pocket.

"It shall serve as a souvenir of trencherwork of which a viking would not be ashamed. But I have been cultivating an appetite for chicken during many years without realizing how hungry I was getting."

He rolled the feathers and bones in the newspapers and stuffed the evidence into the stove. Then he smoothed the fuzzy nap of his old plug hat and brushed his clothes. He felt unaccustomed pride in his personal appearance all of a sudden. He combed the twisted spills out of his beard.

"I don't look like a hornpout any longer. Blast it, I don't feel like a hornpout, either! I have dined! The world's all right!"

He found a cane in a corner of his office. He scrubbed the tarnished head on his sleeve and wiped the dust from the staff. Then he cocked the plug hat a bit to one side, braced back his shoulders, stuck the cane under his arm at a jaunty angle, and marched forth.

"We'll see what there is in the world for a man who has had a square meal at last!" he declared.

About twenty of the more prominent citizens of Avon were assembled on the platform of the railroad station, and they wore that unvarying expression of complacent expectancy which marks patriots who have been invited to participate in a political junket—all bills paid. Squire Drake joined them—made his bigness among them—thumped down his cane when he put forth his opinions, and men who had known him and his meek humility through all the years surveyed this new assertiveness with mild surprise. He was first at the carriage door when Colonel Presson jangled up in his chariot. The squire was a bit astonished by his own forwardness at this juncture, knowing that in the drab past he would have slunk on the side lines.

Colonel Presson, ere he dismounted, gave into the squire's hands a square parcel.

"Kindly pass these cigars around among the gentlemen," he commanded, instinctively selecting as aid de camp the man to whom he had promised his favor.

Clapping palms greeted the colonel

when he stepped from his brougham upon the platform.

"I thank you all for this testimonial of respect and confidence, and I shall administer my high office in a manner to show that I am worthy of the trust. I am not making the office a mere stepping-stone to higher political preferment. I shall show the country what a high sheriff should represent, not only in the dignity which should attach to the position, but as a molder of the morals of the unfortunate."

He slapped across his gloved palm the bunch of mileage books to be used for the transportation of his retinue.

"I have remarked to-day in the hearing of one citizen, and I will repeat that remark here and now: 'I would rather be high sheriff of Ligonia County —in view of my plans of prison uplift —than be President of the United States.'"

There was more applause, in which the squire joined by rapping the head of his cane on the box of cigars. Then he pried off the lid and proceeded to hand around the "treat."

"The colonel is certainly doing this thing right," stated a recipient, nipping off the end of a "smoke" and feeling for a match.

The squire nipped a cigar of his own and accepted a light from the patriot, for cane and box were encumbrances.

"Out of his plenty he gives freely," agreed Mr. Drake.

"I trust you will pardon me, gentlemen, if I am not quite as amiable as usual this afternoon," pleaded Colonel Presson. "Just before I left Broadview Towers, my farm manager reported to me a loss which is most exasperating."

Murmurs of sympathizing inquiry!

"A crested, golden Polish cock is missing from my estate."

Louder murmurs, expressing indignation!

"It was safely inclosed in my yard. It must have been stolen by some miscreant."

Squire Drake rolled his cigar to one corner of his mouth and stepped in front of the colonel, exhibiting much interest.

"What did you say the name of it was?"

"A crested, golden Polish. A prize bird of pedigree. That is why the loss annoys me so devilishly. I believe it had not its equal in the State."

The squire straightened perceptibly and twitched at the bottom of his vest, and in spite of himself his expression was that of complacency instead of sympathy.

"I paid two hundred dollars for that bird," declared Colonel Presson.

The squire did not flinch or blink.

"Was he worth all of that, or was it just a fancy price?" he asked.

"He was worth it—for his breeding, for his pedigree."

Mr. Drake passed on, giving away the cigars. He slipped his plug hat to a little sharper and more cocky angle on his head.

"I'll never eat a hornpout again," he told himself; "no, not after a two-hundred-dollar dinner. My brain was all right on that fish diet—but I always knew that something was the matter with my grip and my grit. Any man who wouldn't respect himself on a new and high plane with two hundred dollars' worth of vittles inside him ought to knock out his teeth and eat mush and milk for the rest of his life. Thank goodness I'm full of pedigreed rooster and exalted self-respect!"

That new feeling within him caused Squire Fillmore Drake to stand out conspicuously in the throng which faced Colonel Presson in the sheriff's office at the shire.

"I will ask my good friend, Mr. Drake, to administer the oath of office," said the colonel.

"I'll do it, and I hope you allow me to copy your example and do it without a fee," proffered the squire politely.

There was a dinner with speeches at the Eagle Hotel after the ceremony of induction into office, and Squire Drake enlivened the occasion with an olla-podrida of quaint humor and homely good sense and tactful compliment to the host—the real, sparkling gem of the

evening—an effort which placed the squire in a new light before his townsmen. They agreed breathlessly that they didn't know it was in him.

Colonel Presson drew Squire Drake out of the press of the banquet guests who were departing to return to Avon on the late train.

"I find that you are a man who has not been understood or appreciated. My instinct told me that you were in a rut. You are now showing that a little shaking up is doing you good. Some folks might say that it is condescension on my part to accept an office which has been lowered by cheap politicians. But I consider that to be high sheriff of this county, as I shall conduct the office, is an honor. I think you can shed equal luster on the position of turnkey. You will be my right hand in the administration. I offer you the place."

"I'll take it," stated Mr. Drake, with thankful promptitude.

He received from the sheriff a nickel badge and a written order on the hold-over official.

"I shall remain the night at the hotel here, in order to make my official entry at nine in the morning in due state," said the colonel. "You are to go at once to the jail and take over the keys and all authority. Prepare the prisoners, and mass them ready for my address which I shall deliver immediately on my arrival."

A sullen subaltern, who seemed to be glad to dump his burden of responsibility, gave the keys to the squire and departed. It was near the hour of midnight, but the new turnkey of Ligonia County jail refreshed himself first with one of the testimonial cigars, spent several hours of pleasant reverie, and then slept soundly in a big chair.

In the morning he prepared to mass the prisoners. He had asked no questions of his predecessor, who seemed to be a grouchy sort of person, growling inarticulately in reply to the squire's bland overtures.

He found only one cell occupied after he had unlocked the iron door and had made a tour of the corridor. The prisoner was a thin, little man with the pallor of a "white drunkard."

He was in a wistfully communicative mood.

"I hold the record—it has been something to brag about. Sixteenth sixty-day sentence as a common drunk. Tommy Eye is my name. Mebbe you have heard of me. Sent up for sixteen times—sixteen times sixty—it's a record. But I ain't going to try to keep it up—no matter about the record—no matter if it is something to brag about. This county ain't what it used to be. No crime any more. Nobody coming to jail any more. County has gone backward. It ain't like old times in this jail. Not a man to pass the time of day with. It's solitary confinement—and that wasn't in my sentence. Most of the trouble is with the grub. Drunks and tramps have emigrated to other counties where there's more sociability and better vittles. You pull up a stool and sit down, and I'll——"

"I haven't time to listen to stories this morning," stated the turnkey. "You come with me. I'm going to mass you."

"That's it! That's what I've said! No sociability! But what did you say you was going to do to me?" he asked suspiciously.

"Mass you—according to the sheriff's orders."

"I ain't done northing to break rules," whined the prisoner. "I ain't been massed here before—sixteen sentences, too—and I won't be massed now."

"It only means that you're going to be taken out where the new sheriff can talk to you," explained Mr. Drake.

"Are you going to do it to the other prisoner, too?"

"Where is he?" demanded the squire, glancing along the row of cells.

"He's up in the women's room. He's a dude. But if it ain't going to be done to him, I won't let it be done to me. I'm a prisoner with a record, and I've got a right to say something about how things shall be run here."

"The two of you will be massed. Come along!"

Leaving Mr. Eye in the turnkey's

office, the squire hunted up the woman's room, which he found to be a large and comfortable apartment over the sheriff's quarters. The sole tenant was a fat man whose plump chops were ridged by an amiable grin as soon as Mr. Drake entered. The prisoner was seated in an easy-chair, the tails of his checked English walking suit draped carefully over his knees. He laid on the table beside him a miniature volume, removed his eyeglasses with graceful gesture, and the spring of a coil drew them against his fancy waistcoat. Mr. Drake glanced at the windows to assure himself that there were bars there. He had been about to apologize for intruding on a gentleman's privacy.

"Ah, I assume that you are the new warder of our grim bastile!"

"How do you happen to be in here?" inquired the squire, mildly respectful.

"Oh, a silly error of some sort. A draft, I believe, a draft which was protested—a mistake at the other end, I have no doubt. But a yokel who did not understand the intricacies of finance called it an attempt to defraud an innkeeper. It was a trivial matter—I allowed them to have their way with me. Besides, I needed a period of repose for pondering on certain large matters—and to reperuse my favorite bard."

He flipped a gesture at a heap of little books on the table.

"Shakespeare in a vest-pocket edition. Quite a wonderful little set. Given in exchange for cigarette coupons."

The squire picked up one of the volumes, showing much interest. Again coincidence! It was "Julius Cæsar." He said aloud:

"Upon what meat doth this, our Cæsar, feed
That he is grown so great?"

"Exactly! I see that you are a devotee as well as myself. Permit me! 'Let me have men about me that are fat, sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights.' Thus am I indorsed by a great mind."

"If there's a mistake in your case, you'd better tell the new sheriff and have it rectified," suggested the squire, warming toward this kindred spirit in the cult of "Willum."

"No, kind warder, no! In the words of Bottom"—he picked up the volume he had been reading—"'I see their knavery, this is to make an ass of me, to affright me if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can; I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear that I am not afraid.' Not that I intend to sing," added the prisoner. "I need a calm and retired corner, where I may mediate on large plans. I am contented here, where no greasy publican can disturb my thoughts by insistent mention of a board bill. By the way, what about my breakfast?"

"I—I am new here—I haven't organized as yet," faltered the squire.

"The food has been poor. The other turnkey did the cooking. Bean swagon, salt fish, and bread and treacle. I trust you are going to do better. Are you to be cook?"

"I don't know. It's for the new sheriff to give off his orders in that line. And his first orders are to mass the prisoners at nine o'clock. What does your watch say?" The squire had noted the huge chain across the fancy waistcoat.

"That the hand of the dial nearly marks the hour," stated the prisoner graciously. "I will accompany you."

When they entered the turnkey's office, he cast listless and disparaging glance on Mr. Eye and made no reply to the latter's sociable greeting: "Morning, mate!" In fact, he turned his back on Mr. Eye.

It was plain that Mr. Eye's animosity had been on the hair trigger.

"It's just as I suspected. You're a stuck-up dude. You're getting favors your first time here that I ain't getting—and I've been here sixteen——"

"You mind your manners!" commanded the squire.

"Then let other prisoners that's in jail with me mind theirs. I'm going to emigrate out of this county, anyway, and be arrested where there's more

life and sociability. But in the meantime——"

"In the meantime you'll keep your mouth closed, if I have to gag you with one of these keys," declared the squire, shaking the jangling bunch under Mr. Eye's red-tipped nose. The next moment, the turnkey had official use for his keys. There was an alarm on the door gong. When he swung the portal he disclosed Colonel Presson. The new sheriff was stiffly erect in the full consciousness of power and dignity. There was a silk rosette on the side of his plug hat, and a new gold badge glistened on his breast. But as he was about to enter, a little man came running up the granite steps behind him.

"I am the Reverend Doctor Tunnecliff, Sheriff Presson," he announced breathlessly. "I arrived at the hotel just after you had left, and I have hurried in pursuit. When I read the interview you gave out yesterday, I slapped my hand across the newspaper and I remarked to Mrs. Tunnecliff, as Mrs. Tunnecliff will be pleased to inform you at lunch to-day—I trust you will honor us—I remarked: 'There, my dear, there is a gentleman with a broad and comprehensive idea of what a real sheriff should be. Note his resolve to elevate the county prison to the level of an institution from which moral reform shall radiate and out of which real men, erect and reformed, shall be sent to take their place in society.'"

"I thank you," said the colonel, accepting the outstretched hand.

"And before you are overwhelmed by other invitations, I want to ask you to address our men's society in the vestry on the subject of prison reform and sociological and psychological uplift."

"I will do so, because promulgation of my plans will be a large part of my activities. I am now about to address my prisoners. I'll be pleased to have you come in and listen."

Squire Drake closed the big door behind them.

"You will mass the prisoners," directed the sheriff.

"They are massed, sir."

The Reverend Doctor Tunnecliff, intent on the abstract instead of concrete, chatted on:

"I have derived much information and profit from a perusal of Calvert's 'History and Methods, Punitive and Probationary.' I will place the volume at your disposal. It is——"

"Where are the rest of my prisoners?" demanded the sheriff. There were mingled incredulity and resentment in his tones; he looked like a man who felt that he had been bunkoed.

"There are only these two, sir."

"If such is the case, there has been wretched mismanagement in this county," declared the new sheriff. "It must be that criminals are left to run at large."

"Personally I know a lot of folks who ought to be in here," agreed the squire. "But these two are all I find on the premises."

"You're right about mismanagement," squeaked Mr. Eye. "No sociability even between prisoners!" He scowled at the broad back of his fellow inmate. "Nothing was said to me about solitary confinement. I demand——"

"Who is this fellow?" asked the sheriff.

"Do you mean to say you haven't heard of me?" demanded Mr. Eye, beating his narrow chest. "I'm the best known——"

"You will wait until questions are put to you in regular form," directed the sheriff sternly. "This is a strange condition of affairs. Only two prisoners. I shall look into the matter. Mr. Drake, under the circumstances, I shall dispense with my address. You may remove the prisoners."

The turnkey obeyed, and returned to his superior in the sheriff's office, where Colonel Presson was listening, but with abstraction, to his caller.

"They haven't been fed this morning," he reported. "It seems that the other turnkey did the cooking for 'em."

"Do you care to undertake the duty temporarily?"

"I can do it as well as not, sir. I am used to cooking. The regular jail diet is bean swagon, salt fish, and——"

"I believe that rehabilitation of char-

acter depends largely on good and proper food," stated the sheriff.

"An absolutely correct view," indorsed the clergyman.

"There's a lot in that idea," agreed Mr. Drake. He sighed. "But the county allows only three dollars and fifty cents a week for each prisoner. I have been looking it up in the county commissioners' report. Seeing that a high sheriff gets only four hundred dollars for salary, he has to depend on his fees and on what he can save out of the board of prisoners——"

"Are you talking to me?" demanded the colonel.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think I have accepted this office to make a profit as a boarding-house keeper, sir? I shall make that allowance up to five dollars a week out of my own pocket. I shall ask you to give prisoners the best you can. I am not in this position for money, Mr. Drake. I shall add my salary of four hundred dollars to your pay and fees, in order that you may take keen, personal interest in this institution. I promised yesterday to do something handsome for you in case you showed efficiency."

"I will do the best I know how." His gloomy air while he had been canvassing food possibilities at three dollars-fifty per week had departed suddenly. He foresaw a cook's regular privileges.

Armed with written authority from the sheriff, he hurried out to a market and loaded his basket to the brim. It was a ten-o'clock breakfast, and Mr. Eye was squealing with rage at the bars of his cell before the turnkey came with plate and pannikins. Then Mr. Eye promptly stopped squealing, and moisture dripped from his loose lips.

"Jumped-up americaneezus!" he blurted. "Steak, pertaters, and hot coffee! And it ain't my birthday, nor it ain't Thanksgiving! Steak! And pertaters! Thick steak—with a bone! Sheriff's treat, I reckon. But I'm almost afraid to eat it. It will spoil my appetite for bean swagon. It will be tough to go back to swagon."

"You will not have any more bean swagon if you obey all jail rules. Hereafter, salt fish and swagon will be punishment for disobedience. This jail is on a new basis."

Mr. Drake took more pains with the breakfast for the prisoner in the woman's room. The fat man rubbed his hands and beamed and was effusive in his thankful appreciation. The turnkey left him with the first mouthful of steak bulging in his cheek, eyes shining with delight as he gloated above the rest of the food.

The squire had observed cook's prerogative and had saved the tenderloin for himself, having an especial tooth for tenderloin. Furthermore, he fried onions and had real cream for his coffee. He meditated on his situation as he munched contentedly.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,'" he mused. "It's as Willum said! Hornpouts and dry crackers until I was shaken up. But inside of twenty-four hours a two-hundred-dollar rooster, a six-course banquet, tenderloin steak, and fixings! So let me live from now on that I shall not disgrace that crested, golden Polish aristocrat! That's proper grace for meat! And as a reminder——"

He took the wishbone from his pocket and hung it on a nail behind the stove.

He smoked one of the testimonial cigars after breakfast—he had thriftily stowed on his person the dozen or so which were left in the box. When he went up to the woman's room after the plates, he gave one of the cigars to the prisoner; somehow he could not resist the impulse to do that; it did seem that a cigar was needed to complete that picture of well-fed content.

"My card—as a step toward better acquaintance," said the prisoner, his right hand reaching for the cigar, his left hand proffering the card. It carried the information: "Mr. O. Wattell Burr, Ideas."

"No sample cases needed for my line," stated Mr. Burr genially. "I carry my stock in here." He tapped a pudgy forefinger on his bald spot.

"You need not doubt my abilities, although I am here just now under a cloud. But even that fabled bird, the phœnix, must go into the fire occasionally in order to rise again, renewed and refreshed. I shall rise from the ashes, sir." He licked his cigar around and around and lighted it with satisfaction.

"I note with interest that Colonel Rodburd Presson is our new sheriff. I have known him in the fields of finance, though he evidently did not recognize me."

"Shall I hand him this card?"

"No. And if you will respect my feelings you will not mention to him that I have ever known him. It would be mutually embarrassing under these circumstances."

"How did he get his money?" asked the squire eagerly.

But Mr. Burr gazed serenely through the tobacco smoke and ignored the query. "Colonel Presson seemed to be greatly disappointed by the size of his audience," he suggested.

"He says he has taken this job so as to make over men, but you can't run a factory without you have stock to work on."

The squire gathered the dishes and nested them in the hook of his arm.

"Considered as an enterprise, this institution seems to be pretty well run down," pursued Mr. Burr. "And that's too bad, because the world is full of men who need stimulating contact with such a man as Colonel Presson. A full jail would mean full opportunities."

"I don't know what's going to be done about it," declared Mr. Drake, on his way to the door. "We can't put a card in the papers, saying: 'Prisoners Wanted.'"

"No," admitted Mr. Burr, before the door was locked on him; "but it is too bad to disappoint a real philanthropist."

At the end of two days of ennui, Colonel Presson exhibited his disappointment very plainly indeed.

"No opportunity for my reform work—none for experiments on human nature," he complained. "That wretch out there in the cell falls asleep whenever I talk to him. He seems to be very torpid."

"I'm feeding him pretty high, according to orders," stated the squire. "Perhaps he is overfed."

"The prisoner, Burr, is intelligent and tractable and professes entire reform. Therefore, my activity in that direction is ended."

"However, he wants an experiment tried on him, sir. He has asked me to open up the matter with you. But of course you will not do what he asks."

"Why do you presume to judge for me what I will or will not do in this new field of mine?"

"I don't presume," faltered the squire. "But he—he——"

"He what?"

"He wants to go for two days on parole to attend some personal business."

The sheriff displayed reviving interest in affairs.

"I will talk with the prisoner, Burr. We shall see."

A half hour later he came into the turnkey's room, accompanied by Mr. Burr, who wore his overcoat and carried a little bag in his hand.

"You will listen as witness, Turnkey Drake. By personal intercession in certain quarters, Prisoner Burr believes that he can shorten his sentence and will be enabled to take his position in the world more quickly in a new phase of efficiency. To aid in such endeavors is my aim. I hereby parole Prisoner Burr for two days and hand him copy of the agreement. You will countersign as witness, Turnkey Drake."

The squire obeyed, nipping his lips and showing no enthusiasm.

"You will have the jail pretty much to yourself for the next few days," said the sheriff, after Mr. Burr had departed blithesomely. "I have arranged to deliver lectures in various parts of the county, speaking on prison reform. I hope to enlist general interest in the movement."

Left alone to cook for Tommy Eye, Mr. Drake found solitude to be wearing on the nerves; he developed a grouch, and his lone prisoner was, of

course, the only target for his spleen. His grouch turned into an unreasoning hatred of the slothful glutton, and when Mr. Eye ventured to complain because the pork chops were burned, the turnkey grabbed the mutineer's ear and marched him to the kitchen and ordered him to wash dishes.

"I haven't been sentenced to hard labor," protested the prisoner. "I've been here sixteen——"

The turnkey picked up a broom and drove his prisoner to the sink.

"To your work!" he commanded. "And then you go into the doghole on bread and water."

Perched on a stool, the broom across his knees, Squire Drake grimly enjoyed a new sensation: he was supreme boss of a bondservant.

"Hurry with those dishes!" he commanded. "After those are done, you are going to mop up the floor, wash the windows, clean the cell room, and —and—well, we'll see what else there is to be done."

"I know my rights," squealed Mr. Eye, waving his wet dishrag like a banner of protest.

"And I know mine as turnkey of this jail. You hustle your boots!"

A bit later, an alarm on the door gong called the squire from his serene contemplation of Mr. Eye's activities.

"If I find that you have lagged while I've been gone, you'll go into the doghole without the bread," was the squire's parting warning.

He admitted three solid citizens who stated that they were the county commissioners, come to inspect the affairs of the new administration in shrievalty management. They wagged their heads and pursed their lips when the turnkey informed them that the sheriff was away on a lecturing trip.

"We will inspect the premises and the prisoners," said the chairman of the board.

The squire scrubbed his palm over his chin, displaying embarrassment.

"One of them has been paroled by the sheriff—it's his new system," he stammered. "But the other——"

He led the way to the kitchen.

No one was there. The outside door was open. The new turnkey had failed to turn the key on Mr. Eye.

"And the other one," he continued, hiding his astonishment and his discomfiture as best he could, "I have paroled him—it's our new system."

"I don't understand it," stated a commissioner in severe tones.

"The sheriff will explain it when you see him. It's moral reform—a new system—according to the up-to-date methods."

But the squire was unable to look the solemn chairman in the eye.

"I think we will come back and inspect this jail when the sheriff is here and when there is something to inspect." Thereupon they marched away.

The squire locked the kitchen door and finished the dishes. Then he went and sat in his big chair, in solitary state, in an empty jail. He did not allow the matter of the levanting Tommy Eye to trouble him overmuch.

"I can do a little judicious lying to the sheriff," he pondered. "He ought to feel complimented because I have adopted his system."

On the third day Colonel Presson returned, and the squire was glad, for solitude had been wearing.

"It has been a most successful trip, Turnkey Drake. I have informed the county thoroughly of my plans and what I shall do as soon as I have the human material to work on. What says the Prisoner Burr since his return?"

"He hasn't returned."

"But his parole——"

"And the other one—I paroled him—and he hasn't come back, either."

"Do you mean to say there are no prisoners in my jail?"

"Not a one."

"How dared you usurp my powers!"

"You handed over authority to me. I supposed you wanted me to carry out your system, seeing that I am a humble admirer and follower."

The colonel surveyed his subaltern with lessened severity.

"Remember after this that I am supreme head, and you have no author-

ity except that which I delegate specifically."

He walked to the window and tapped nervous and impatient tattoo on the pane. The flakes of the first snowfall of the season were swirling through leafless branches outside, winter was treading closely on the heels of a late and lush Indian summer.

"It is dreary—it is disappointing, Turnkey Drake. Not that I desire to see crime rampant. But other jails, where there is no intelligent attempt at consistent reform, are crowded. It may be that my recent promulgation of my plans may have some effect—though I am not exactly sure."

"I don't believe even promulgation of steak three times a day will start up crime in a county where folks seem to be behaving themselves," declared Mr. Drake—and then he was called by the door gong.

A man had marshaled three other men on the steps. In the jail yard was hitched a tired horse who had dragged his burden in a muddy beach wagon.

"I'm Constable Royal Hunt, of Freedom, and I'm here with prisoners," announced the leader, tapping his badge. "In with you, boys!"

They were plain, ordinary, frowzy tramps—there was no mistaking the breed. Mr. Hunt's declaration that they were tramps was superfluous.

"I don't know how they happened to drift away from the railroad, all of twelve miles, over into our town, where we haven't been bothered with tramps. But along they came, one by one, and begged vittles, and so I yarded them as the law provided is my duty. And here they are, sheriff. And glad to see a new sheriff on the job! Booth was hogging all the pickings to himself. Here are the mittimuses, all signed by Trial Justice Cobb, of our town." He handed over the papers and pulled out a dog-eared account book over which he poised stubby pencil. "Now, sheriff. listen to my figgers and see if I'm right. There hasn't been any crime in Freedom till these tramps came along, and so I'm a little rusty on fees." He cleared his throat. "Service of warrants, fifty cents each. Travel to arrest at twelve cents a mile, dollar-forty-four. One delivered himself, and I don't reckon travel in his case. Keeping prisoners and——"

Sheriff Presson was revealing by embarrassed flush and blank expression that he did not in the least understand this matter of fees. To confess his ignorance would be to topple over his dignity.

"I leave all the minor details to my deputy, the turnkey," he said, checking the constable. "I delegate full authority to you, Mr. Drake. Act for me."

He retired to his private office in order to be safely out of reach of any questions.

"Very well," continued Constable Hunt, after the door was closed. "We'll go on—and I'm glad it's between you and me, turnkey. I never could get on very well with them high-class dudes. As I said, keeping prisoner and tending trial-justice court, seventy-five cents per twelve hours. Service of mittimuses, fifty cents each. Conveyance of prisoners, five cents a mile, sixty cents each. Personal travel accompanying prisoner, twelve cents a mile, a dollar and forty-four each."

"A dollar and forty-four for all three—you brought 'em in all at once," corrected the squire.

"No, sir! It's always been done my way. I've had my tip from an old officer. Mittimuses is different dates. County commissioners won't know."

"It's graft," declared the turnkey, "and I'm acting for another man."

"You'd better act right if he hopes to be elected for another term," snapped the constable resentfully. "Who do you think swings politics in my town? I do. If I bunch 'em, as I have here, the law is all covered—mileage is allowed by law. It gives me a little good profit at a time of year when my farm work is slack. But if you don't show some decent spirit to a party worker, I'll simply one by one 'em! Time ain't any object to me at this season of year. Cost to county will then be the same—I'll get my money, just as much, and when next election

time comes I'll put the knife to your boss, Mr. Turnkey."

"That isn't right," protested the turnkey, fighting the battles of his superior.

"But it's politics, and it's good business. Now what say? Bunch 'em, or one by one 'em? It won't make as much difference to me as it does to you."

The door gong purred loudly.

The turnkey admitted another man with a badge who led in four vagrants, slouchy, indifferent persons; he introduced himself as Constable Marengo Kitchen, of Unity, and volunteered with affability to await his turn.

Turnkey Drake led Mr. Hunt into a corner.

"Of course I know that the sheriff wants to stand in prime with the boys —he has plans—he wants to be elected —but——"

"If he doesn't play the game, where does he get off—where does anybody get off in politics? You're acting for him. He told you to act. I heard him tell you. Now, act as if you had some common sense. If it comes to a pinch and he asks my support and wants to know what the trouble is in politics, I'll tell him you threw him down when you had a chance to help him. Now, shall I bunch the others?"

"The others! What are you—making a regular winter business out of this tramp rush?"

"Well, I've got three more yarded in my barn chamber," said the constable, with a wink. "I don't know where they came from, or why they came. But the law says jug 'em when they own up that they're tramps. As a constable, I'm for the law. Again I ask: Shall I bunch 'em or one by one 'em?"

"Bunch 'em," said the turnkey, in husky tones, surrendering himself and his superior to the octopus of political graft—feeling himself drawn by a force stronger than himself. He signed and indorsed the constable's papers.

Mr. Drake installed his prisoners in cells and returned to Constable Kitchen. Mr. Kitchen, of Unity, a gentleman of confident and breezy demeanor, did not argue the matter of the quadruplication of his personal traveling expenses. He stated behind his palm that he had been twelve years an officer, knew all the ropes, nudged the turnkey with bony elbow, and suggested that good men must stand together in politics. He furthermore stated that he had more vagrants in hand up country, and would bring them in on the morrow.

"Isn't this something special in the way of a rush?" inquired Mr. Drake.

"Usually pick a few when the cold weather comes on, but I will admit we're doing a little extra this season. However, there's the law that's made and pervided. Got to arrest 'em."

Before the early dusk settled there were five other consignments from rural towns, to wit:

Liberty, two, in charge of Constable Joyce.

Levant, three, teamed in by Constable Dillingham.

Argyle, one—but Constable Belden explained confidentially that his two-seated wagon was in the repair shop but would be in condition to bring in four prisoners the next day—and he stated with firmness that under those circumstances he must be allowed two days' board for each captive. Mr. Drake did not protest—he was too busy.

Standish, three—with more to come on the word of Constable Blish.

The final and record arrival for the day consisted of seven very cheerful prisoners who had been captured in their invasion of Carmel. They came in Constable Chute's hayrack.

Turnkey Drake wrought valiantly in the kitchen, and managed to get supper to his charges on time. When he puffed out the corridor lamps at nine o'clock and left his boarders snoring in the comfortable bliss of digestion, all the cells were filled and seven men slept on field beds.

The next day's arrivals totaled some threescore—and the resources of Ligonia County's jail were exhausted by a wide margin. Turnkey Drake gave up all attempts to maintain ordinary jail regulations. There was no consistency in locking a few of the prisoners in cells and allowing the overplus the run

of the corridors. Therefore, he merely locked the big door between the jail and the office and allowed the men to roam at will. They settled down into a cheerful colony. Many were songsters of considerable ability, there were some fairly good speechmakers, all of them had playing cards and tobacco; it was such a dizzying transformation from utter loneliness and do nothing that Mr. Drake seemed to be unable to grasp the situation. He toiled on alone, doggedly and desperately. He ordered in all the mattresses and blankets he could find in the village stores; he did not find time to wash the kitchen smut from his worried face. By promise of a private table in the kitchen, with special privileges in the matter of choice cuts and extra titbits, he secured a band of willing helpers from among the prisoners, but he continued as chief cook.

Then came the three county commissioners; they stared through the peephole upon the press of prisoners, stared at each other, and then marched into Sheriff Presson's private office and stared at him. The sheriff was blandly polite, seemed to be thoroughly satisfied with the situation, but seemed unable to give any explanation or information which would shed light.

"However, Mr. Commissioner, in view of my reform plans, I am deeply gratified because this wonderful opportunity has been presented to me."

"On the other hand," returned the chairman, "seeing that my board is responsible for county expenses and must explain to the taxpayers, we are not specially gratified. Your turnkey told us that you are starting a new system."

"I am, sir."

"But he said your system was to send prisoners out of the jail. We found the place empty, and he told us that."

"I parole under certain conditions," stated Colonel Presson, with dignity.

"Then I hope you'll parole this flock of buzzards and shoo 'em over the county line before the taxpayers rise in rebellion. We have never had anything like this before. We are told that you have been out sort of canvassing for prisoners."

"I have been expounding my plans of reform. I may have lamented the fact that I had no material to work on."

Muffled by walls, but audible, were the songs and gabblings in the cell room.

"There is something phony in all this —and I ain't afraid to speak my mind," averred one of the commissioners, a blunt farmer from up country. "Look out of that window. There are three more constables in the jail yard with loads! If somebody has been holding out inducements to make this place a winter resort for all the loose tramps in this part of the United States, it's time for facts to be known."

"I say again that I don't know where they are from or why they have come," insisted the sheriff. "That they are here is sufficient. They are duly committed to my charge. I have no right to set them free until I exert my moral influence or until their terms expire. We need more room and more equipment. As county commissioners, you are obliged to furnish same. Is there any argument as to that?"

The commissioners scowled and were silent and marched out into the jail. They interrogated the prisoners, seeking a solution of the mystery. Prisoners unblushingly admitted that they were tramps, engaged in tramping, and beyond that they deposed nothing.

Those prisoners could not be thrown out upon the community; the duty of the commissioners was plainly what the sheriff had stated. So they hired carpenters to build a flooring—a double-deck affair—on a level with the upper tier of cells. The carpenters finished none too soon. When they drove the last nail there were one hundred and thirty-seven prisoners in the jail; a few stragglers were hauled in the next day, and then all activity in the outside tramp market ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

Turnkey Drake was too tired and too busy to do any connected thinking on the subject; he faced a condition and not a theory. He slept his scanty snatch

of slumber on a cot in the kitchen in order to be near the scene of his principal activities and to keep the fire going. All night the oven was stuffed with bean pots. Daytimes with bread pans! He had no time for steaks except for himself and his private band of potwallopers. Great pots of stews and stifles simmered constantly. And after the day's work was over and Sheriff Presson had finished his evening address to his prisoners—addresses which were greeted with applause of suspicious vehemence—the squire sat up as long as he could keep his eyes pried open and figured industriously. It was a pleasing occupation.

He found that, whereas an allowance of five dollars each per week would not leave much profit after feeding two prisoners, five dollars each on a basis of one hundred and forty boarders made a proposition which was wonderfully different. He paid no rent, his fuel was free, his helpers worked for their board, his guests ate pork and beans and bread and were satisfied with brisket and chuck and round in their stews. Hardly believing his own figures—doing his sums over and over while he struggled with somnolence—he finally convinced himself that he was cleaning up a weekly profit of nearly three dollars on each prisoner. Besides that, he was keeping up strength and courage and good spirits at his own special, personal, and private table on the best the market afforded.

Then returned Mr. O. Whattell Burr. He arrived under cover of evening, dusting snow from his overcoat as he entered when Mr. Drake opened the outer door.

"Ah, it is good to be at home once more!" he declared, with heartiness. "Greetings, my fellow follower of dear old Will!"

"His-s-sh!" remonstrated Mr. Drake, indicating Sheriff Presson, who stood in the open door admitting to the cell room, delivering his evening address.

Mr. Burr smiled tolerantly, removed his overcoat, and sat down where he could gaze in on the prisoners from behind the speaker. He led the applause when the colonel had finished. Then he jumped up and proffered a cordial hand which the colonel rejected.

"I expected as much," confessed Mr. Burr, without resentment. "*Mea culpa!* The plea of exigency may excuse me in part. But the fact that I have returned ought to justify me. However, if it does not, I will meekly accept punishment."

He crossed his fat hands on his breast and bowed his head.

"Put him in the doghole!" commanded the sheriff, with lordly gesture.

The turnkey fiddled a smutty finger across his nose and looked doubtful.

"There are four fellows in there now, sir—asking special to be put there so as to get away from the snoring. And we haven't any more room in the corridors."

"Jam him in there—anywhere! I'll deal with him in the morning." Colonel Presson retired to his office and slammed the door behind him.

The turnkey closed the door upon the prisoners and locked it.

"A dreary winter is beginning," observed Mr. Burr. "It is pleasant to see so much activity in here—so many unfortunates housed from the inclemency of the weather."

Squire Drake looked Mr. Burr in the eye, and then he looked him up and down—he opened his mouth to speak, and then he closed it. The door gong thrummed on this embarrassing silence. It continued to ring steadily until the turnkey yanked the door open with impatient hand.

Tommy Eye had evidently been leaning against the button and the portal. He lunged in, the storm hurling a fistful of snow on his drooping shoulders; he reeled across the room, running to recover his balance, and fell into the turnkey's easy-chair.

"I'm back," he mumbled. "I hear —ick!—hear eversing's more sosh—ock!—more sosh—uck!—more sosher-bub-bub-bubble. I'm back!" He closed his eyes and began to snore.

Mr. Burr draped his overcoat on his arm and picked up his little bag.

"Until my punishment is settled upon,

noble warder," he said, with an ingratiating smile, "why not put me back in my old quarters so that I may not herd with such swine as that?" He nodded at the freshly returned prodigal.

"There's no other place that is sensible where you can be lodged," said the squire. He led the way upstairs to the women's room, lighted the lamp, and inspected the serene Mr. Burr with extra and peculiar interest.

"I discern that you have something to say to me," stated that gentleman.

"I don't know whether I have or not."

"Then, if you are really in doubt, I have something to say to you. I trust that the sheriff's disappointment is now not so acute and that everything is coming along to suit you personally."

Though the squire's reply was not voiced except as a husky mumble, Mr. Burr continued genially:

"I'm glad to hear it. I have shown again that I can approach a decadent enterprise and by intelligent and originality put it on its feet."

He winked at the nonresponsive turnkey.

"Simply a matter of promoting legitimate enterprise," went on the prisoner. "Merely satisfying a demand. The sheriff could not carry out cherished plans without prisoners. But neither of you was in a position to act. I acted. A word to New York Hunch and Boston Fat and a few of that ilk! They knew the unfortunates who ask from the world in the bleak days of winter a little food, warmth, shelter, and a jail without a workshop attachment. Now, tell me, do you find money—a little—on most of the prisoners?"

"Ranges from a dollar to three," acknowledged Mr. Drake.

"Glad to know it. It shows that my entirely original plan is working. I told the boys to tax the constables a part of the official profits. If the price is not forthcoming in one town, move on to the next. I presume it has become more or less of an auction among the constables. Very well! Competition stimulates business. The boys ought to do still better on price when they start out again after doing their thirty days. That is the regular sentence, I hear."

"Look here——"

"I ask you to take note that I am here now as your friend and as their representative, and, therefore, it is easy to have a perfect mutual understanding."

Mr. Drake banged a smutty fist on the table.

"I will not allow myself to be pulled into any plot," he declared.

"You are in now, dear sir. Populace is now wondering, but populace merely sees you attending to your duties. Populace likes to believe the worst about officials—give populace one hint. Like Cæsar's wife, an official must be above suspicion. I can prove that I was allowed to leave this jail. I will declare to populace that I was sent out to solicit business."

Mr. Drake again seemed to have trouble with his speech.

"Your protestations will seem weak in the face of the facts—this jail is full of facts. You are now doing merely what the law commands you to do. Result: sure profit and everything going on according to statute. You rise up and begin to bellow! I can bellow more loudly, all the time pointing to facts. Result: no profit, ruin for you, discredit for high sheriff, who is now happy."

"That's it! It's on account of the sheriff. I'm liable to get him into trouble," mourned Mr. Drake. Sweat was on his forehead in spite of the fact that his breath was streaming in vapor clouds on the frosty air.

"That's right," agreed Mr. Burr calmly; "unless you listen to me. Now, as representative of the guests, I will inform you that I have arranged to give them courteous treatment and a fair amount of privileges. Such methods will insure their return to us as soon as they get out and dicker with a constable. You will give them two chicken dinners per week. One on your own account, as a testimonial of appreciation of continued patronage; they

will pass the hat among themselves for the other. I shall proceed to organize a club for the regulation of these internal affairs."

"Do you think you're going to sit up in this room and run this jail?" demanded the turnkey.

"I have been speaking as next friend of the guests," went on Mr. Burr. "Now, speaking as your partner——"

"My partner?" The squire beat his work-reddened hand on his breast.

"Certainly, sir. There can be no other basis of arrangement between us. I had thought of a percentage on net receipts. But that would entail bookkeeping, and I realize that your time is fully occupied. I will consider fifty dollars each Saturday evening as fair return for my brain labor."

Two books of the Shakespeare set lay on the table, with titles exposed. The squire, puckering his brows and trying to steady his thoughts, perused those titles. They were "Love's Labor Lost" and "Comedy of Errors."

"I'll not keep you up any longer, sir," said Mr. Burr. "I understand fully that your burden is onerous. But you will find that the boys will meet you halfway so long as you treat them kindly. And remember that I stand between, as a friend of both sides."

The insensible Tommy Eye, in the easy-chair, afforded a target for a portion of the turnkey's general spleen. He yanked the soggy inebriate down into the kitchen and wakened him by repeated volleys of water from a long-handled, tin dipper. He had no special reason for wanting Tommy Eye awake; but when the squire came away from the bland Mr. Burr he required an outlet for his feelings—and Mr. Eye appeared to be enjoying himself with too much blissful content. When Mr. Eye was thoroughly and reproachfully awake, the turnkey shoved the prisoner into the cell room and locked the door.

By such light as a dim oil lamp in its high bracket afforded, Mr. Eye surveyed the crowded cells and the men on the floor, nested in their field beds as close as red herring in a box.

"It's certainly more sociable," commented Mr. Eye. "But I don't see why he wanted to wake me up after I was all set for the night. And I'm waked up thorough. It's lonesome when everybody else is asleep." He started to grope his way past the sleeping men; he stepped on legs and arms, for his legs were still unsteady and his footing insecure. Men cursed him drowsily, and told him to lie down. But there did not seem to be any place for the newcomer. Therefore, he teetered on, here and there, roaming like an uneasy spirit of the night.

"He didn't have any business waking me up like he did," insisted Mr. Eye, his pettish temper taking on a wire edge. "If men ain't awake so that a feller can be sociable with 'em, what's the use of being awake yourself? I didn't intend to come back into this country, anyway. I'd never have done it if I hadn't heard it was more sociable."

"Shut up that gabble!" commanded a sharp voice. "I want to go to sleep."

"Ain't you asleep?"

"Of course I ain't! Ain't I talking to you?"

"That's right—you are! It's the only sociability I've heard here tonight," agreed Mr. Eye, making his way in the direction of the voice and stepping on other sleepers. "Now, see here!" he protested, his squeaking tones riding high over the angry oaths. "I'm here to be sociable. I have been here sixteen times—it's a record. It seems like home to me. It's like I was to home and you are all visiting me. It's——"

"It's time you are shut up, you cussed whippoorwill!" snarled an inmate.

"I ain't to blame for being woke up and left to ramble without no place to lay my head! And it's my home here! I know this place so well——"

Mr. Eye halted his protests all of a sudden. An inspiration had come to him with those last words. He did know that place. He was familiar with every nook, corner, hole, cellar, and retreat in that jail. And there was nothing concerned with or pertaining to liquor in that county with which he

was not fully acquainted. He knew that in a cellar under the cell room the enforcement seizers of illegal intoxicants had stored their plunder for a long time. Often, while serving a sentence, he had drooled while he surveyed the paving in a corner of the lower corridor, and had pondered on what muscle and determination would yield to a thirsty man.

"Perhaps you don't think I know how to be sociable and how to extend hospitality in my old home jail where I know the ropes," stated Mr. Eye. Then he found men who were awake and he kneeled down and imparted information in husky whispers—and the word was passed along in more whispers and then there was great activity in a certain corner.

A half hour later, jugs and demijohns and bottles were coming up through a hole in the flooring, passed on from grimy hands to grimy hands.

An hour later, Foreman Bass, of the local fire company—a man who kept his ears open for any night alarms—rose, went to his chamber window, listened for a little while, and then opined aloud that "hell has busted loose in the jail." In a short time that opinion was shared by the neighborhood at large. More outrageous bedlamism never shocked honest and sober citizens.

Shortly after the uproar started, Turnkey Drake tapped on the door of the sheriff's chamber.

"What does this disturbance mean?" demanded Colonel Presson.

"I don't know, sir."

"Put a stop to it at once!"

"When I opened the door they threw bottles. I tried to talk through the peekhole, but they are too good marksmen. I tried ——"

"I cannot bother myself over the petty details of jail management," stated the sheriff, with indignation. "I have placed all that in your hands, Mr. Turnkey. Make them stop that noise and go to bed—at once!"

In his desperate anxiety Drake decided to appeal to Promoter Burr. He found that gentleman propped up in bed, reading "Macbeth."

"Truly, something doth appear to murder sleep within these castle walls," said Mr. Burr.

"You claim you organized 'em—you say they're your chums. Go down there and make 'em shut up."

"Certainly," agreed Mr. Burr.

But a fusillade of bottles drove him back incontinently the moment he showed his face at the cell-room door.

"They are plainly in a convivial mood," he informed the turnkey. "I know I have suggested kind treatment and privileges. But you have gone too far, sir. You should not have given liquor to them."

The prisoners were bellowing in chorus: "We want chicken!"

"Perhaps a midnight repast may calm them," suggested Mr. Burr. "I cannot think of a more feasible plan, now that your error in judgment has put them into this hilarious mood. You should not have——"

Squire Drake picked up a chair. His lips were rolled away from his teeth.

"Give me any more of that talk, after loading this sculch into this jail, and I'll brain you!"

"Oh, if that is your mood," purred Mr. Burr, "I will retire from the scene. I know my place as a prisoner."

Mr. Drake was left in solitude to plod to and fro in the narrow confines of the office, keeping anxious vigil. The hullabaloo on the other side of the iron door continued. Then came indignant citizens, flocking in when he had opened the outside portal in answer to the alarm of the gong. There was one of the county commissioners; there was Foreman Bass, of Niagara Fire Company; there were many others.

"This is a scandal in this community," vociferated the commissioner. "Stop it!"

"How?" demanded the turnkey.

"That's not our business. Stop it!"

"If it's the general impression of all concerned that I'm Samson, Hercules, and a tiger tamer, all rolled up in one man, it's time the idea is dropped," shouted Mr. Drake.

"Where is the high sheriff?"

"In bed."

"Why is he not here on his job?"

"You better send a delegation in to ask him. He didn't give me any satisfaction just now, when I put the question to him."

"This is an old jail—those men are likely to break out any moment," suggested a timid citizen.

"I hope they'll do it and won't stop running till they're in another county," declared the commissioner. "Ligonia County will be bankrupt before the winter is over."

"Do I understand that the official management of this jail is on its back with paws in the air?" asked Foreman Bass. He replied to himself: "It looks like it. Very well! Then it's time for taxpayers to rally."

He rushed out into the night. Five minutes later the fire-alarm bell began vigorous call for the members of Niagara company.

"I don't know what he intends to do," vouchsafed the commissioner to the assembled citizens, "but I figure that whatever he does do will be more sensible than what is being done just now by the officials in charge of this jail."

Colonel Rodburd Presson overheard that remark. He had emerged from his seclusion; it was plain that the general excitement, topped off by a fire alarm, had been too much for what—so he had informed himself—was his self-restraint. He pulled his silk hat down to an assertive pitch on his forehead. He was in full panoply of office.

"I trust you are not criticizing my management of this institution, sir."

"No; I can't criticize it, because there isn't any management."

The din in the cell room was so vehement at that moment that the sheriff and commissioner found dialogue inconvenient; they stood and scowled at each other.

And after a time, as the uproar waxed louder, came Foreman Bass, kicking open the outside door. Haste had rendered him voiceless and nigh breathless. He was dragging hose and waved with the big nozzle, demanding pathway.

"This is unwarranted intrusion, my good man," stated Colonel Presson. "There is no fire here."

Foreman Bass, a burly individual, whose close-set eyes denoted stubbornness, shouldered the sheriff to one side and lunged toward the door with the peephole.

"I have my own methods in force here; this is a psychological experiment," insisted the colonel. "You are interfering——"

Foreman Bass pulled open the peephole slide and shoved the nozzle into the aperture.

"Now, all together on the brakes, out there!" he bawled over his shoulder. "Give her tar, men!"

The stream cracked from the nozzle.

The first sounds which ceased were bacchanalian mirth and music. Then the concerted demands for chicken were quieted; the guests of Ligonia jail seemed to have lost their appetites. In a little while Foreman Bass knew that he had them at his mercy. He ordered the turnkey to unlock the big door, and Mr. Drake meekly obeyed. Men attempted a rush from within, but once more the foreman bellowed: "Give her tar!" And the stream bowled down desperate prisoners as if they were ninepins.

"Better hold up," excitedly advised a citizen who rushed in from outdoors. "They have busted the bars off a window and are escaping."

"Give her tar!" insisted Mr. Bass in his best tones.

Colonel Presson grabbed the arm of the commissioner.

"This is outrage—intrusion—interference with my prison-reform plans."

The commissioner broke away and addressed the citizens who were massing at the door.

"Make up icy snowballs and pelt 'em!" he commanded. "Give 'em Tophet! Keep 'em running!"

Foreman Bass advanced with his hose, boring the stream into the black recesses of the cells. Strangling stragglers fled and climbed upon the backs

of those who were crowding through the unbarred windows.

"Under these circumstances—after this action by the citizens of this county—I resign," roared Colonel Presson. "I shall not suffer my dignity to be insulted in this fashion. Let the consequences fall where they may, I resign!"

He took his fur-lined overcoat from its closet, yanked it on with indignant force, and walked away from the jail.

"They're all out," reported Foreman Bass from the darkness. "Better shut her off, commissioner?"

"No," said that official, with grim decision. "Fill that pit till the water runs out over the window sills. Then we'll let her freeze."

"Correct," agreed Foreman Bass. "Free skating for tramps here, but no more free board."

It was no longer a question of bolts, bars, or discipline at Ligonia jail. The bastile had fallen.

Mr. Burr walked downstairs, his overcoat buttoned to the neck, his books in a neat bundle under his arm. Turnkey Drake was humbly effacing himself in a corner of the dimly lighted office.

"I gave you good advice," protested Mr. Burr sternly. "The efficacy of chicken! On natures such as those men possess!"

"I know all about it," snapped Mr. Drake. "I have tried it on myself. I ate Mercutio, and he was worth two hundred dollars."

Mr. Burr stared. This person was plainly raving.

"And take the thing by and large," proceeded Mr. Drake, his sour gaze on the foreman of Niagara, busy at his task, "I am not at all sure that I started on a safe line of diet."

"Are you losing your mind?" asked the promoter.

Mr. Drake was silent, his eyes on Foreman Bass and the whishing nozzle.

"It is plain that I have associated myself with an incompetent," declared Mr. Burr. "The brains, the plan, the men! I furnished the whole equipment! But you are wholly lacking in executive ability. I dissolve our partnership. I shall transfer the system to another county. Good night!"

Mr. Drake remained in his corner, meditating.

When the cell pit was full and Niagara had departed, the county commissioner accosted the turnkey.

"Squire Drake, you are known in this county as a steadygoing man, and I don't hold you responsible for the damnation foolishness of a sheriff who goes out and advertises for prisoners. As near as I can judge, you have done your best here. I'm going to leave you in charge of the premises, and I'll head a petition to have you appointed sheriff after that plug-hatted dude resigns officially. I know I can convince the governor that we need to settle down to a common-sense basis in this county. You'd like the position, I take it?"

"I would," declared Squire Drake, reflecting on the mysterious ways of Providence.

When he was alone at last, still meditating, Tommy Eye sidled in at the door which the turnkey had not closed against the winter. The commissioner's parting suggestion was that the doors better be left open so that the ice-making might be assisted.

Mr. Eye was soaked and shivering and repentant, but a certain resolution animated him.

"I ain't the kind of a man that deserts a sinking ship," he quavered, pointing to the congealing pool. "It ain't homelike here any more. It ain't sociable. I've been here sixteen times, and nothing ever happened like this. I could have run away with the rest of 'em. But the slur would go out around that you couldn't hang onto even one prisoner. I ain't going to have that said about a man who has given me good grub. But I'm awful cold." His teeth chattered. "It may be pneumony———if I ain't taken care of. Where be ye going to put me?"

With sudden impulse, which he did not bother to explain to himself, Squire Drake led Tommy Eye, faithful prisoner, to the sheriff's private room and installed him in the warm bed.

Starr, of the Desert

By B. M. Bower

Author of "Flying U's Last Stand," "The Ranch at the Wolverine," Etc.

When Helen May came upon her Desert Man in New Mexico he was ostensibly acting in the prosaic capacity of cattle buyer for a big El Paso meat company, but she could picture him living alone somewhere in the desert's wild fastnesses, aloof from the little things of life. He seemed to epitomize vividly the meaning of a song she had often sung unmeaningly:

From the desert I come to thee,
On my Arab shod with fire,
And the winds are left behind
In the speed of my desire.

As a matter of fact, Starr was very much concerned with the little things of life—the little things and the big. Before you have finished the novel you will be impressed with the tremendous importance of the things that keep him on the jump—things, by the way, that have nothing to do with cattle buying.

(A Four-Part Novel—Part One)

CHAPTER I.

DAFFODILS were selling at two bits a dozen in the flower stand beside the New Era Drug Store. Therefore Peter Stevenson knew that winter was over, and that the weather would probably "settle." There would be the spring fogs, of course—and fog did not agree with Helen May since that last spell of grippe. Peter thought that he would stop and see the doctor again, and ask him what he thought of a bungalow out against the hills behind Hollywood. Something cheap, of course—and within the five-cent limit on the street cars. Something with a sleeping porch that opened upon a pleasanter outlook than your neighbor's back yard. Then, if Helen May made a practice of riding to and from town on the open end of the cars, that would help considerably; in fact, the longer the ride the better it would be for Helen May. The air was sweet and clean out there toward the hills. It would be better for Vic, too. It would break up that habit of going to see "the boys" as soon as he had swallowed his dinner.

Peter finished refilling the prescription on which he was working, and went out to see if he were needed in front. He sold a lip stick to a pert miss, who, from sheer instinct, made eyes at him, and he wished that Helen May had such plump cheeks—though he thanked God she had not the girl's sophisticated eyes. ("Yes, a bungalow out there, against the hills, ought to do a lot for Helen May.") He glanced up at the great clock, and unconsciously compared his cheap watch with it, saw that in ten minutes he would

be free for the day, and bethought him to telephone the doctor and make sure of the appointment. Helen May had seen the doctor at noon—since she had given dad her word that she would go, and since she never broke a promise. He would find out just what the doctor thought.

When he returned from the phone, a fat woman wanted peroxide, and she thought the bottle he offered was smaller than the last two-bit bottle she had bought. Peter very patiently discussed the matter with her, and smiled politely when she finally decided to try another place. His kidneys were hurting him again. He wondered if Helen May would remember that he must not eat heavy meats, and would get something else for their dinner.

He glanced again at the clock. He had four minutes yet to serve. He wondered why the doctor had seemed so eager to see him. He had a vague feeling of uneasiness, though the doctor had not spoken more than a dozen words. At six he went behind the mirrored partition and got his coat and hat, said good night to such clerks as came in his way, and went out and bought a dozen daffodils from the Greek flower vender. All day he had been arguing with himself because of this small extravagance which tempted him. Now that it was settled, and the flowers were in his hand, he was glad that he had bought them. Helen May loved all growing things. He set off briskly, in spite of his aching loins, thinking how Helen May would hover over the flowers rapturously even while she scolded him for his extravagance.

Half an hour later, when he turned to leave the doctor's office, he left the daffodils lying forgotten on a chair until the doctor called him back and gave them to him with a keen glance that had in it a good deal of sympathy.

"You're almost as bad off, yourself, old man," he said bluntly. "Want to watch those kidneys of yours. Come in to-morrow or next day and let me look you over. Or Sunday will do, if you aren't working then. I don't like your color. Here, wait a minute. I'll give you a prescription. You better stop and fill it before you go home. Take the first dose before you eat—and come in Sunday. Man, you don't want to neglect yourself. You——"

"Then you don't think Hollywood ——" Peter took the daffodils and began absently crumpling the waxed paper around them. His eyes, when he looked into the doctor's face, were very wistful and very, very tired.

"Hollywood!" The doctor snorted. "One lung's badly affected, I tell you. What she's got to have is high, dry air—like Arizona or New Mexico or Colorado. And right out in the open—like an Injun for a year or two. Radical change of climate—change of living. Another year of office work will kill her." He stopped and eyed Peter pityingly. "Predisposition—and then the grippe—her mother went that way, didn't she?"

"Yes," Peter replied, flat-toned and patient. "Yes, she went—that way."

"Well, you know what it means. Get her out of here just as quick as possible, and you'll save her. Helen May's a girl worth saving."

"Yes," Peter replied flatly, as before. 'Yes—she's worth saving."

"You bet! Well, you do that. And don't put off coming here Sunday. And don't forget to fill that prescription and take it, till I see you again."

Peter smiled politely and went down to the hall to the elevator and laid his finger on the bell, and waited until the steel cage paused to let him in. He walked out and up Third Street and waited on the corner of Hill until the car he wanted stopped on the corner to let a few more passengers squeeze on. Peter found a foothold on the back platform, and something to hang onto, and adapted himself to the press of people around him, protecting as best he could the daffodils, with their fine, green stuff that went with them and that straggled out and away from the paper. Whenever human eyes met his with a light of recognition, Peter would smile and bow and the eyes would smile back. But he never knew

who owned the eyes, or even that he was performing one of the little courtesies of life.

All he knew was that Helen May was going the way her mother had gone, and that the only thing that could save her was to take her to New Mexico or Colorado or Arizona; and she was worth saving—even the doctor had been struck with her worth; and a bungalow out against the hills wouldn't do at all, not even with a sleeping porch and the open-air ride back and forth every day. Radical change she must have. Arizona or New Mexico or—the moon, which seemed not much more remote or inaccessible.

When his street was called, he edged out to the steps and climbed down, wondering how the doctor expected a man with Peter's salary to act upon his advice. "You do that!" said the doctor—and left Peter to discover, if he could, how it was to be done without money.

Helen May was listlessly setting the table when he arrived. He went up to her for the customary little peck on the cheek which passes for a kiss among relatives, and Helen May waved him off with a half smile that was unlike her customary cheerfulness.

"I've quit kissing," she said. "It's unsanitary."

"What did the doctor tell you, babe? You went to see him, didn't you?" Peter managed a smile—business policy had made smiling a habit—while he unwound the paper from around the daffodils.

"Dad, I've told you and told you not to buy flowers! Oh, golly, aren't they beautiful? But you mustn't. I'm going to get my salary cut, the first. They say business doesn't warrant my present plutocratic income. Five a week less, Bob said it would be. That'll pull the company back to a profit-sharing basis, of course!"

"Lots of folks are losing their jobs," Peter reminded her apathetically. "What did the doctor say about your cough, babe?"

"Oh, he told me to quit working. Why is it doctors never have any brains about such things? Charge a person two dollars or so for telling him to do what's impossible. What does he think I am—a movie queen?"

She turned away from the faded, anxious eyes that hurt her with their realization of helplessness. There was a red spot on either cheek—the rose of dread which her father had watched heart-sinkingly. "I know what he *thinks* is the matter," she added defiantly. "But that doesn't make it so. It's just the grippe hanging on. I've felt a lot better since the weather cleared up. It's those raw winds—and half the time they haven't had the steam on at all in the mornings, and the office is like an ice box till the sun warms it."

"Vic home yet?" Peter abandoned the subject for one not much more cheerful. Vic, fifteen and fully absorbed in his own activities, was more and more becoming a sore subject between the two.

"No. I called up Ed's mother just before you came, but he hadn't been there. She thought Ed was over here with Vic. I don't know where else to ask."

"Did you try the gym?"

"No. He won't go there any more. They got after him for something he did—broke a window somehow. There's no use fussing, dad. He'll come when he's hungry enough. He's broke, so he can't eat downtown."

Peter sighed and went away to brush his graying hair carefully over his bald spot, while Helen May brewed the tea and made final preparations for dinner. The daffodils she arranged, with little, caressing pulls and pats, in a tall, slim vase of plain glass, and placed the vase in the center of the table, just as Peter knew she would do.

"Oh, but you're sweet!" she said, and stooped with her face close bent above them. "I wish I could lie down in a whole big patch of you and just look at the sky and at you nodding and perking all around me—and not do a living thing all day but just lie

there and soak in blue and gold and sweet smells and silence."

Peter, coming to the open doorway, turned and tiptoed back, as though he had intruded upon some secret, and stood irresolutely, smoothing his hair down with the flat of his hand until she called him to come and eat. She was cheerful as ever while she served him scrupulously. She smiled at him now and then, tilting her head because the daffodils stood between them. She said no more about the doctor's advice or the problem of poverty. She did not cough, and the movements of her thin, well-shaped hands were sure and swift. More than once she made a pause while she pulled a daffodil toward her and gazed adoringly into its yellow cup.

Peter might have been reassured, were it not for the telltale flush on her cheek and the unnatural shine in her eyes. As it was, every fascinating little whimsy of hers stabbed him afresh with the pain of her need and of his helplessness. Arizona or New Mexico or Colorado, the doctor had said; and Peter knew that it must be so. And he with his druggist's salary and his pitiful two hundred dollars in the savings bank! And with the druggist's salary stopping automatically the moment he stopped reporting for duty! Peter was neither an atheist nor a socialist, yet he was close to cursing his God and his country whenever Helen May smiled at him around the dozen daffodils.

"Your insurance is due the tenth, dad," she remarked irrelevantly, when they had reached the dessert stage of cream puffs from the delicatessen nearest Helen May's work. "Why don't you cut it down? It's sinful, the amount of money we've paid out for insurance. You need a new suit this spring. And the difference——"

"I don't see what's wrong with this suit," Peter objected, throwing out his scrawny chest and glancing down his front with prejudiced eyes that refused to see any shabbiness. "A little cleaning and pressing, maybe——"

"A little suit of that new gray everybody's wearing these days, you mean," she amended relentlessly. "Don't argue, dad. You've *got* to have a suit. And that old insurance——"

"Jitneys are getting thicker every day," Peter contended, in feeble jest. "A man needs to be well insured in this town. There's Vic—if anything happened, he's got to be educated, just the same. And, by the endowment plan, in fifteen years more, I'll have a nice little lump. It's—on account of the endowment, babe. I don't want to sell drugs all my life."

"Just the same, you're going to have some new clothes." Helen May retrenched herself behind the declaration. "And it's going to be gray. And a gray hat with a dove-colored band and the bow in the back. And tan shoes," she added implacably, daintily lifting the roof off her cream puff to see how generous had been the filling.

"Who? Me?" Vic launched himself in among them and slid spinelessly into his chair, as only a lanky boy can slide. "Happy thought!—only I'll have bottle green for mine. A fellow stepped on my roof this afternoon, so——"

"You'll wear a cap then—or go bareheaded and claim it's to make your hair grow." Helen May regarded him coldly. "Lots of fellows do. You don't get a single new dud before the Fourth, Vic Stevenson."

"Oh, don't I?" Vic drawled, with much sarcasm, and pulled two dollars from his trousers pocket, displaying them with lofty triumph. "I get a new hat to-morrow, Miss Stingy."

"Vic, where did you get that money?" Helen May's eyes flamed to the battle. "Have you been staying out of school and hanging around those picture studios?"

"Honorable toil," Vic mouthed, spearing a stuffed green pepper dexterously. "Fifty rehearsals for two one-minute scenes of honorable college gangs honorably hailing the hee-ro. Waugh! Where'd you get these things—or did the cat bring it in? Stuffed with laundry soap, if you ask me. Why don't you try that new place on Spring?"

"Vic Stevenson!" Helen May began, in true sisterly disapprobation. "Is that getting you anywhere in your studies? A few more days out of school, and——"

Peter's thoughts turned inward. He did not even hear the half-playful, half-angry dispute between these two. Vic was a heady youth, much given to rebelling against the authority of Helen May, who bullied or wheedled, as her mood and the emergency might impel, as sisters do the world over. Peter was thinking of his two hundred dollars saved against disaster; and a third of that to go for life insurance on the tenth, which was just one row down on the calendar; and Helen May going the way her mother had gone—unless she lived out of doors, "like an Indian," in Arizona or—— Peter's mind refused to name again the remote, inaccessible places where Helen May might evade the penalty of being the child of her mother—and of poverty.

Gray hat for Peter or bottle-green hat for Vic—what did it matter whether either of them ever again owned a hat, if Helen May must stay there in the city and face the doom that had been pronounced upon her? What did anything matter, if Babe died and left him plodding along alone? Vic did not occur to him consolingly. Vic was a responsibility, a comfort he was not. Like many men, Peter could not seem to understand his son half as well as he understood his daughter. He could not see why Vic should frivol away his time; why he should have all those funny little conceits and airs of youth; why he should lord it over Helen May, who was proving her efficiency and her strength of character anew every day. If Helen May went the way her mother had gone, Peter felt that he would be alone, and that life would be quite bare and bleak and empty of every incentive toward bearing the little daily burdens of existence.

He got up—with his hands going instinctively to his loins, to ease the ache there—and went out upon the porch and stood looking drearily down upon the asphalted street, where the white paths of speeding automobiles slashed the dusk like runaway sunbeams on a frolic. Then the street lights winked and sputtered and began to glow with white brilliance.

Arizona or New Mexico or Colorado —Peter knew what the doctor had in mind. Vast plains, unpeopled, pure, immutable in their calm; stars that came down at night and hung just over your head, making the darkness alive with their bright presence; a little cottage hunched against a hill, a candle winking cheerily through the window at the stars; the cries of night birds, the drone of insects, the distant howling of a coyote; far away on the boundary of your possessions, a fence of barbed wire stretching through a hollow and up over a hill; distance and quiet and calm, be it day or night. And Helen May coming through the sunlight, riding a gentle-eyed pony; Helen May with her deep-gold hair tousled in the wind, and with health dancing in her eyes that were the color of a ripe chestnut—odd contrast to her hair; Helen May with the little red spots gone from her cheek bones and with tanned skin and freckles on her nose and a laugh on her lips—coming up at a gallop, with the sun behind her—and something more; with sickness behind her and the drudgery of eight hours a day in an office, and poverty and unhappiness. And Vic—yes, Vic in overalls and a straw hat, growing up to be the strong man he never would be in the city.

Like many another commonplace man of the towns, for all his colorless ways and his thinning hair and his struggle against poverty, Peter was something of a dreamer. And, like all the rest of us who build our dreams out of wishes and hopes and maybes, Peter had not a single fact to use in his foundation. Arizona, New Mexico, or Colorado—to Peter they were but symbols of all those dear, unattainable things he longed for. And that he longed for them, not for himself, but for another, who was very dear to him, only made the longing keener and more tragic.

CHAPTER II.

We are always exclaiming over the strange way in which events link themselves together in chains; and, when the chains bind us to a certain condition or environment, we are in the habit of blandly declaring ourselves victims of the force of circumstances. By that rule, Peter found himself being swept into a certain channel of thought, about which events began at once to link themselves into a chain which drew him perforce into a certain path that he must follow. Or it may have been his peculiar single-mindedness that forced him to follow the path; however that may be, circumstances made it easy.

If Helen May worried about her cough and her failing energy, she did not mention the fact; but that was Helen May's way, and Peter was not comforted by her apparent dismissal of the subject. So far as he could see, she was a great deal more inclined to worry over Vic, who refused to stay in school when he could now and then earn a dollar or two acting in "mob scenes" for some photo-play company out in Hollywood. He did not spend the money wisely—Helen May declared that he was better off with empty pockets.

Ordinarily Peter would have taken Vic's rebellion seriously enough to put a stop to it. He did half promise Helen May that he would notify all the directors he could get hold of not to employ Vic in any capacity; even to "chase him off the studio grounds," as Helen May put it. But he did not, because chance threw him a bit of solid material on which to rebuild his air castle for Helen May.

He was edging his way down the long food counter, collecting his lunch of rice pudding, milk, and whole-wheat bread in a cafeteria on Hill Street. He was late, and there was no unoccupied table to be had, so he finally set his tray down where a haggard-featured woman clerk had just eaten hastily her salad and pie. A brown-skinned young fellow, with country manners and a range-fostered disposition to talk with any one who tarried within talking distance, was just unloading his trayload of provender on the opposite side of the table. He looked across at Peter's tray, grinned at the meager luncheon, and then looked up into Peter's face, with friendliness chasing the amusement from his eyes.

"Golly gee! There's a heap of difference in our appetites, from the looks of our layouts," he began amiably. "I'm hungry as a she-wolf, myself. Hope they don't make me wash the dishes when I'm through—I'm always kinda scared of these grab-it-and-go joints. I always feel like making a sneak when nobody's looking, for fear I'll be called back to clean up."

Peter smiled and handed his tray to a waiter. "I wish I could eat a meal like that," he confessed politely.

"Well, you could if you lived out more in the open. Town kinda gits a person's appetite. Why, first time I come in here and went down the chute past the feed troughs, it took two trays to pack away the grub I seen and wanted. Lookout lady on the high stool, she give me two tickets—thought there was two of me, I reckon. But I ain't eatin' the way I was then. Town's kinda gittin' me like it's got the rest of you. Last night I come pretty near makin' my mind to go back. Little old shack back there in the greasewood didn't look so bad, after all. Only I do hate like sin to batch—and a fellow couldn't take a woman out there in the desert to live, unless he had money to make her comfortable. So I'm going to give up my homestead—if I can find some easy mark to buy out my relinquishment. Don't want to let it slide, yuh see, 'cause the improvements is worth a little something, and the money'd come handy right now, helpin' me into something here. There's a chance to buy into a nice little service station—fellow calls it, where automobiles stop to git pumped up with air and gasoline and stuff. If I can sell my improvements, I'll buy in there. Looks foolish to go back, once I made up my mind to quit."

He ate while he talked, and he talked because he had the simple mind of a child and must think out loud in order to be perfectly at ease. He had that hunger for speech which comes sometimes to men who have lived far from their kind. Peter listened to him vaguely at first; then avidly, with an inner excitement which his mild, expressionless face hid like a mask.

"I was getting kinda discouraged when my horse up 'n' died," the eater went on. "And then, when some durn greaser went 'n' stole my burro, I jest up 'n' sold my saddle and a few head uh sheep I had, and pulled out. New Mexico ranching is all right for them that likes it, but excuse *me!* I want to live where I can see a movie once in a while, anyhow." He stopped for the simple, primitive reason that he had filled his mouth to overflowing with food so that speech was for the moment a physical impossibility.

Peter sipped his glass of milk, and his thoughts raced back and forth between the door of opportunity, that stood ajar, and the mountain of difficulty which he must somehow move by his mental strength alone before he and his might pass through that door.

"Ah—how much do you value your improvements at?" he asked. His emotion was so great that his voice refused to carry it, and so was flat and expressionless as his commonplace face.

"Well," gurgled the young man, sluicing his gullet with coffee, "it's pretty hard to figure exactly. I've got a good little shack, you see, and there's a spring right close handy by. Springs is sure worth money in that country—water being scurse as it is. There's a-plenty for the house and a few head of stock—well, in a good, wet year a person could raise a little garden, maybe; few radishes and beans, and things like that. But, uh course, that can't hardly be called an improvement, 'cause it was there when I took the place. A greaser, he had the land fenced and was usin' the spring 'n' range like it was his own, and most folks, they was scared to file on it. But she's sure filed on now, and I've got six weeks yet before it can be jumped.

"Well, there's a shed for stock, and a pretty fair brush corral—and I built me a pretty fair road into the place—about a mile off the main road, it is—I done that odd times the year I was on the place. The sheep I sold—sheep's a good price now. I only had seventeen—coyotes and greasers, they kep' stealin' 'em on me, or I'd 'a' had more. I'd 'a' lost 'em all, I guess, if it hadn't been for Loma—dog I got with me. Them——"

Peter looked at his watch in that furtive way which polite persons employ when time presses and a companion is garrulous. He had finished his rice pudding and his milk, and in five minutes he would be expected to hang up his hat behind the mirrored partition of the New Era Drug Store and walk out smilingly to serve the New Era customers—patrons, the New Era called them. In five minutes he must be on duty, yet Peter felt that his very life depended upon bringing this wordy young man to a point in his monologue.

"If you will come to the New Era Drug Store, at six o'clock," said Peter, "I shall be glad to talk with you further about this homestead of yours. I—ah—have a friend who has an idea of—ah—locating somewhere in Arizona or New Mexico or Colorado"—Peter could name them now without that sick feeling of despair!—"and he might be interested. But," he added hastily, "he could not afford to pay very much for a place. Still, if your price is low enough——"

"Oh, I reckon we can git together on the price," the young man said cheerfully, as Peter rose and picked up his check. "I'll be there at six, sure as shootin' cats in a bag. I know where the New Era's at—I went in there last night and got something to stop my tooth achin'. Ached like the very devil for a while, but that stuff sure fixed her——"

Peter smiled and bowed and went his way hurriedly, his pale lips working nervously with the excitement that filled

him. The mountain of difficulty was there, implacably blocking the way. But beyond was the door of opportunity, and the door was ajar. There must, thought Peter, be some way to pass the mountain and reach the door.

Helen May telephoned that she meant to pick out that gray suit for him that evening. Since it was Saturday, the stores would be open, and there was a sale on at Hecheimer's. She had seen some stunning grays in the window, one-third off. And would he——

Peter's voice was almost irritable when he told her that he had a business engagement, and could not meet her. And he added the information that he would probably eat downtown, as he did not know how long he would be detained. Helen May was positively forbidden to do anything at all about the suit until he had a chance to talk with her. After which unprecedented firmness Peter left the phone hurriedly, lest Helen May should laugh at his authority and lay down a law of her own, which she was perfectly capable of doing.

At five minutes to six the young man presented himself at the New Era, and waited for Peter at the soda fountain with a lemon soda, and a pretty girl to smile at his naïve remarks. Peter's heart had given a jump and a flutter when the young man walked in—that some one else might snap at the chance to buy a relinquishment of a homestead in New Mexico. And yet, how did Peter expect to buy anything of the sort? If Peter knew, he kept the knowledge in the back of his mind, telling himself that there would be some way out.

He went with the young man, whose name he learned was Johnny Calvert, and had dinner with him at the cafeteria where they had met at noon. Johnny talked a great deal, ate a great deal, and unconsciously convinced Peter that he was an honest young man, who was exactly what he represented himself to be. He had papers which proved his claim upon three hundred and twenty acres of land in Dona Ana County, New Mexico. He also had a map, upon which the location of his claim was marked with a pencil. Malpais, he said, was the nearest railroad point; not much of a point, but you could ride there and back in a day—if you got up early enough in the morning!

Peter asked about the climate and the altitude. Johnny was a bit hazy about the latter, but it was close to mountains, he said, and it was as high as El Paso, anyway—maybe higher. The climate was like all the rest of the country—coming in streaks of good and bad. Peter, gaining confidence as Johnny talked, spoke of his daughter and her impending doom, and Johnny, instantly grasping the situation, waxed eloquent. Why, that was just the place, he declared. Dry as a bone the weather was most of the year; hot—and lungers liked it hot and dry, he knew. And when it was cold it was sure bracing, too. Why, the country was alive with health seekers. At that, most of 'em got well—them that didn't come too late.

That last sentence threw Peter into a panic. What if he dawdled along and kept Helen May waiting until it was too late? By that time Peter had pretty clearly decided how he was to remove the mountain of difficulty, and he drove the bargain to a conclusion in a short time.

At nine o'clock he let himself into the place he called home, and startled Helen May with the announcement that he had bought her a claim in New Mexico, where she was to live out of doors, like an Indian, and get over that cough, and grow strong as any peasant woman; and where Vic was going to keep out of mischief and learn to amount to something. He did not say what the effect would be upon himself—Peter was not accustomed to considering himself except as a provider of comfort for others.

Helen May did not notice the omission. "*Bought* a claim?" she repeated, and added grimly: "What with?"

"With two hundred dollars cash," Peter replied, smiling queerly. "It's all settled, Babe, and the claim is to stand

in your name. Everything is attended to but the legal signatures before a notary. I was glad my money was in the all-night bank, because I was not compelled to wait until Monday to get it for young Calvert. You will have the relinquishment of his right to the claim, Babe, and a small adobe house with sheds and yards and a good spring of living water. In building up the place into a profitable investment you will be building up your health, which is the first and greatest consideration. I—you must not go the way your mother went. You will not, because you will live in the open and throw off the—ah—incipient——"

"Dad—*Stevenson!*" Helen May was sitting with her arms lying loose in her lap, palm upward. Her lips had been loose and parted a little with the slackness of blank amazement. In those first awful minutes she really believed that her father had suddenly lost his mind; that he was joking never occurred to her. Peter was not gifted with any sense of humor whatsoever, and Helen May knew it as she knew the color of his hair.

"You will no longer be a wage slave, doomed to spend eight hours of every day before a typewriter in that insurance office. You will be independent—a property owner who can see that property grow under your thought and labor. You will see Vic growing up among clean, healthful surroundings. He will be able to bear much of the burden—the brunt of the work. The boy is in a fair way to be ruined if he stays here any longer. There will be six weeks of grace before the claim can be seized—ah—jumped, the young man called it. In that time you must be located upon the place. But you should make all possible haste, in any case, on account of your health. Monday morning we will go together with young Calvert and attend to the legal papers, and then I should advise you to devote your time to making preparations——"

"Dad—*Stevenson!*" Helen May's voice ended in an exasperated, frightened kind of wail. "I—I and Vic! Are you crazy?"

"Not at all. It is sudden, of course. But you will find, when you stop to think it over, that many of the wisest things we ever do are done without dawdling—suddenly, one may say. No, Babe, I——"

"But two hundred dollars just for the rights to the claim—dad, look at it calmly! To build up a ranch takes money. I don't know a thing about ranching, and neither do you; but we both know that much. One has to eat, even on a ranch. I wouldn't have my ten a week, remember, and you wouldn't have your salary—unless you mean to stay here and keep on at the New Era. And that wouldn't work, dad. You know it wouldn't work. Your salary would barely keep you—let alone sending money to us. You can't expect to keep yourself and furnish us money—and you've paid out all you had in the bank. The thing's impossible on the face of it!"

"Yes, planning from that basis, it would be impossible." Peter's eyes were wistful. "I tried to plan that way at first—but I saw it wouldn't do. The expense of getting there, even, would be quite an item in itself. No, it couldn't be done that way, Babe."

"Then will you tell me how else it is to be done?" Helen May's voice was tired and exasperated. "You say you have *paid* the two hundred. That leaves us just the furniture in this flat—and it wouldn't bring enough to take us to the place, let alone having anything to live on when we got there. And my wages would stop, and so would yours. Dad, do you realize what you've done?" She tilted her head forward and stared at him intently through her lashes, which was a trick she had.

"Yes, Babe—I realize perfectly. I'm—not counting on just the furniture. I—think it would pay to ship the stuff on to the claim."

"For Heaven's sake, dad! What *are* you counting on?" Helen May gave a hysterical laugh that set her coughing in a way to make the veins

stand out on forehead and throat. (Peter's hands clenched into fighting fists while he waited for the spasm to wear itself out. She should *not* go the way her mother had gone, he was thinking fiercely.) "What—are—you counting on?" she repeated, when she could speak again.

"Well, I'm counting on—a source that is sure," Peter replied vaguely. "The way will be provided—when the time comes. I—I have thought it all out calmly, Babe. The money will be ready when you need it."

"Dad, don't borrow money! It would be a load that would keep us staggering for years. We are going along all right—better than hundreds of people all around us. I'm feeling better than I was—now the weather is settled, I feel lots better. You can sell whatever you bought—maybe you can make a profit on the sale. Try and do that. Get enough profit to pay for that gray suit I saw in the window!" She was smiling at him now—the whimsical smile that was perhaps her greatest charm.

"Never mind about the gray suit." Peter spoke sharply. "I won't need it." He got up, irritable, and began pacing back and forth across the little sitting room. "You're not better," he declared petulantly. "That's the way your mother used to talk—even up to the very last. A year in that office would kill you. I know. The doctor said so. Your only chance is to get into a high, dry place, where you can live out of doors. He told me so. This young man with the homestead claim was a godsend—a godsend, I tell you. It would be a crime—it would be murder to let the chance slip by for lack of money. I'd steal the money, if I knew of any way to get by with it, and if there was no other way open. But there is a way. I'm taking it.

"I don't want to hear any more argument!" he exclaimed, facing her quite suddenly. His eyes had a light she had never seen in them before. "Monday you will go with me and attend to the necessary legal papers. After that—I'll attend to the means of getting there."

He stood looking down at her where she sat, with her hands clasped in her lap, staring up at him steadfastly from under her eyebrows. His face softened, quivered until she thought he was going to cry like a woman. But he only came and laid a shaking hand on her head and smoothed her hair as one caresses a child.

"Don't oppose me in this, Babe," he said wearily. "I've thought it all out, and it's best for all of us. I can't see you dying here by inches—in the harness. And think of Vic, if that happened! He's just at the age where he needs you. I couldn't do anything much with him alone. It's the best thing to do—the only thing to do. Don't say anything more against it—don't argue. When the time comes, you'll do your part bravely—as I shall do mine. And if you feel that it isn't worth while for yourself, think of Vic."

Peter turned abruptly and went into his room, and Helen May dropped her head down upon her arms and cried a while, though she did not clearly understand why, except that life seemed very cruel, like some formless monster that caught and squeezed the very soul out of one. Soon she heard Vic coming, and pulled herself together for the lecture he had earned by going out without permission and staying later than he should. On one point dad was right, she told herself while she was locking up for the night. Town certainly was no place for Vic.

The next day, urged by her father, Helen May met Johnny Calvert and cooked him a nice dinner, and heard a great deal about her new claim. And Monday forenoon the three attended to certain legal details. She had many moments of panic when she believed her dad was out of his mind, and when she feared that he would do some desperate thing like stealing money to carry out this strange plan. But she did as he wished. There was a certain inflexible quality in Peter's mild voice, a certain determination in his

insignificant face that required obedience to his wishes. Even Vic noticed it, and eyed Peter curiously, and asked Helen May what ailed the old man.

An old man Peter looked when he went to his room that night, leaving Helen May dazed and exhausted after another evening spent in absorbing queer bits of information from the garrulous Johnny Calvert. She would be able to manage all right, now, Peter told her relievedly when Johnny left. She knew as much about the place as she could possibly know without having been there. He said good night, and left her wondering what strange thing her dad would do next. In the morning she knew.

Peter did not answer when Helen May rapped on his door and said that breakfast would be ready in five minutes. Never before had he failed to call out, "All right, Babe!" more or less cheerfully. She waited a minute, listening, and then rapped again, and repeated her customary announcement. Another wait, and she turned the knob and looked in.

She did not scream at what she found there. Vic, sleeping on the couch, behind a screen, in the living room, yawned himself awake and proceeded reluctantly to set his feet upon the floor and grope, sleepy-eyed, for his clothes, never suspecting that in the night, some time, Peter had passed a certain mountain of difficulty and had reached out unafraid and pulled wide open the door of opportunity for his children.

Beyond the door, Helen May was standing rigidly beside the bed where Peter lay, and was reading for the second time the letter which Peter had held in his hand. At first her mind had refused to grasp its meaning. Now, reading slowly, she knew:

DEAR BABE: Don't be horrified at what I have done. I have thought the whole matter over calmly, and I am satisfied that this is the best way. My life could not go on very long, anyway. The doctor made that plain enough to me Sunday. I saw him. I was in a bad way with kidney trouble, he said. I knew it before he told me. I knew I was only good for a few months more at the most, and I would soon be a helpless burden. Besides, I have heart trouble that will account for this sudden taking off, so you can escape any unpleasant gossip.

Take the life insurance, and use it on that claim, for you and Vic. Live out in the open, and get well, and make a man of Vic. Three thousand dollars ought to be ample to put the ranch on a paying basis. And don't blame your dad for collecting it now, when it will do the most good. I could see no benefit in waiting and suffering, and letting you get farther downhill all the while, making it that much harder to climb back. Go at once to your claim, and do your best—that is what will make your dad happiest. You will get well, and you will make a home for you and Vic, and be independent and happy. In doing this you will fulfill the last, loving wish of your father. PETER STEVENSON.

P. S.—Better stock the place with goats. Johnny Calvert thinks they would be better than sheep.

CHAPTER III.

Wise man or fool, Peter had taken the one way to impress obedience upon Helen May. Had he urged and argued and kept on living, Helen May could have brought forth reasons and arguments to combat him. But Peter had taken the simple, unanswerable way of stating his wishes, opening the path to their accomplishment, and then quietly lying back upon his pillow and letting death take him beyond reach of protest.

For days Helen May was numb with the sudden dropping of life's big responsibilities upon her shoulders. She could not even summon energy enough to call Vic to an accounting of his absences from the house. Until after the funeral Vic had been subdued, going around on his toes and looking at Helen May with wide, solemn eyes and lips prone to trembling. But fifteen years is the resilient age, and, two days after Peter was buried, Vic asked her embarrassedly if she thought it would look all right for him to go to the ball game. He had to do *something*, he added defensively.

"Oh, I guess so—run along," Helen May told him absently, without in the least realizing what it was he had wanted to do. After that Vic went

his way, without going through the ceremony of asking her consent, secure in the knowledge of her indifference.

The insurance company for which she had worked set in motion the wheels that would eventually place in her hands the three thousand dollars for which Peter had calmly given his life. She hated the money. She wanted to tell her dad how impossible it was for her to use a cent of it. Yet she must use it. She must use it as he had directed, because he had died to open the way for her obedience. She must take Vic—against his violent young will, she suspected—and she must go to that claim away off there somewhere in the desert, and she must live out in the open—and raise goats! For there was a certain strain of Peter's simplicity in the nature of his daughter. His last-scrawled advice was to her a command which she must obey as soon as she could muster the physical energy for obedience.

"What do I know about goats!" she impatiently asked her empty room one morning after a night of fantastic dreams. "They eat tin cans and paper—and Masonic candidates ride them, and they stand on high banks and look silly, and have long chin whiskers and horns worn back from their foreheads. But, as to *raising* them—what are they good for, for Heaven's sake?"

"Huh? Say, what are you mumbling about?" Vic, it happened, was awake, and Helen May's door was ajar.

"Oh, nothing." Then, the impulse of speech being strong in her, Helen May pulled on a kimono and went out to where Vic lay curled up in the blankets, on the couch. "We've got to go to New Mexico, Vic, and live on that land dad bought the rights to, and raise goats!"

"Yes, we have—not!"

"We have. Dad said so. We've got to do it, Vic. I expect we better start as soon as the insurance is paid—and that ought to be next week. Malpais is the name of the darned place. Inez Garcia says Malpais means bad country. I asked her when she was here yesterday. I expect it does, though you can't tell about Inez. She's tricky about translating stuff; she thinks it's funny to fib about the meaning of things. But I expect it's true—it sounds like that."

"I should worry." Vic yawned with the bland triteness of a boy who speaks mostly in current catch phrases. "I've got a good chance for a juvenile part in that big five-reeler Walt's going to put on. Fat chance anybody's got of putting *me* to herding goats! That New Mexico dope got my number the first time dad sprung it. Not for mine!"

Helen May sat down on the arm of a cheap Mission chair, wrapped her kimono around her thin figure, and looked at Vic from under her lashes. Besides raising goats and living out in the open, she was to make a man of Vic. She did not know which duty appalled her most, or which animal seemed to her the most intractable.

"We've got to do it," she said simply. "I don't like it either, but that doesn't matter. Dad planned that way for us."

Vic sat up crossly, groping for the top button of his pajama coat. His long hair was tousled in front and stood straight up at the back, and his lids were heavy yet with sleep. He looked very young and very unruly, and as though several years of grace were still left to Helen May before she need trouble herself about his manhood.

"Not for mine," he repeated stubbornly. "You can go if you want to, but I'm going to stay in pictures." No film star in the city could have surpassed Vic's tone of careless assurance. "Listen! Dad was queer along toward the last. You know that yourself. And just because he had a nutty idea of a ranch somewhere is no reason why we should drop everything ——"

"We've got to do it, and you needn't fuss, because you've got to go along. I expect we can study up—on goats." Her voice shook a little, for she was close to tears.

"Well, I'm darned if you ain't as nutty as dad was! Uh course, he was

old and sick, and there was plenty of excuse for him to slop down along toward the last. Now, listen! My idea is to get a nifty bungalow out there, handy to the studios, and both of us go into pictures. We can get a car—what I want is a speedy, sassy little boat that can *travel*. Well, and listen: We'll have plenty to live on till we both land in stock. I've got a good chance right now to work into a comedy company—they say my grin screens like a million dollars, and, when it comes to making a comedy get-away, I'm just geared right, somehow, to pull a laugh. That college picture we made got me a lot of notices in the projection room—and I was only doing mob stuff, at that. But I stood out. And Walt's promised me a fat little bit in his five-reeler—I'll land in stock before the summer's half over.

"And you can land with some good company if you just make a stab at it. Your eyes and that trick of looking up under your eyebrows are just the type for these sob leads, and you've got a good photographic face; a *good* face," he emphasized generously. "And your figure couldn't be beat. Believe me, I *know*. You ought to see some of the Janes out there!—and, at that, they manage to get by with their stuff. A little camera experience, under a good director, that would bring out your good points—I was going to spring the idea before, but I knew dad wouldn't stand for it."

"But we've got to go and live on that claim. We've *got* to."

Vic's face purpled. "Say, are you plumb *bugs?* Why——" Vic gulped and stuttered. "Say, where do you get that stuff? You better tie a can to it, sis—it don't get over with me. I'm for screen fame, and I'm going to get it, too. Why, by the time I'm twenty I'll betche I can pull down a salary that'll make Charlie Chaplin look like an extra! Why, my grin ——"

"Your grin you can use on the goats," Helen May quelled unfeelingly. "I only hope it won't scare the poor things to death. You needn't argue about it—as if I was crazy to go! Do you think I want to leave Los Angeles—and everything I care about, and go to New Mexico and live like a savage—and raise goats? I'd rather go to jail, if you ask me. I hate the very thoughts of a ranch, Vic Stevenson, and you know I do. But that doesn't matter a particle. Dad——"

"I told you dad was crazy!" Vic's tone was too violent for grief—his young ambitions were in jeopardy, and even his dad's death must look unimportant alongside the greater catastrophe that threatened. "Do you think, for gosh sake, the whole family's got to be nutty just because he was sick, and got a queer streak?"

"You've no right to say that. Dad—knew what he was doing."

"Aw, where do you *get* that dope?" Vic eyed her disgustedly, and with a good deal of condescension. "If you had any sense, you'd know he was queer for days before—it happened. *I* noticed it, all right, and if you didn't ——"

Helen May did not say anything at all. She got up and went to her room and came back with Peter's last, pitiful letter. She gave it to Vic, and sat down again on the arm of the Mission chair, and waited, looking at him from under her lashes, her head tilted forward.

Vic was impressed—impressed to a round-eyed silence. He knew his dad's handwriting, and he unfolded the sheet and read what Peter had written.

"I found that letter in—his hand—that morning." Helen May tried hard to keep her voice steady. "You mustn't tell any one about it, Vic. They mustn't know—— But, you see, he—after doing that to get the money for me, why—you see, Vic, we've *got* to go there. And we've got to make good. We've got to."

There must have been a little of Peter's disposition in Vic, too. He lay for several minutes staring hard at a patch of sunlight on the farther wall. I suppose when one is fifteen the ambition to be a movie star dies just as hard as does the ambition later to be President of the United States.

"You see, don't you, Vic?" Helen May watched him nervously.

"Well, what do you think I am?" Vic turned upon her with a scowl. "You might have said it was for your health. I never knew you wasn't well. You didn't play fair. You—you kept saying it was to raise goats!"

CHAPTER IV.

Properly speaking, Starr did not belong in New Mexico. He was a Texas man, and, until a certain high official asked him to perform a certain mission for the secret service, he had been a Ranger. Puns were made upon his name when he was Ranger Starr, but he was a Ranger no longer, and the puns had ceased to trouble him. His given name was Chauncy DeWitt; perhaps that is why even his closest friends called him Starr—it was so much easier to say, and it seemed to fit him so much better.

Ostensibly, and for a buffer to public curiosity, Starr was acting in the modest capacity of cattle buyer for a big El Paso meat company. Incidentally he bought young sheep in season, and chickens from the Mexicans and ranchers, and even a bear that had been shot up in the mountains very early in the spring, before the fat had given place to leanness. Whatever else Starr did he kept carefully to himself, but his meat buying was perfectly authentic and satisfactory. And if those who knew his past record wondered at his occupation, Starr had plenty of reasons for the change, and plenty of time in which to explain those reasons.

As to his personal appearance, there is not a great deal to say. Starr would not have attracted any notice in a crowd. He was a trifle above average height, perhaps, and he had nice eyes, whose color might be a matter of dispute, because they were a bit too dark for gray, a bit too light for real hazel, with tiny flecks of green in certain lights. His lashes were almost heavy enough to be called a mark of beauty, and, when he took off his hat—which was not often, except at mealtime and when he slept in a real bed—there was something very attractive about his forehead and the way his hair grew on his temples. His mouth was pleasant when his mood was pleasant, but that was not always. One front tooth had been gold-crowned, which made his smile a trifle conspicuous, but could not be called a disfigurement. For the rest, he was tanned to a real desert copper, and riding kept him healthily lean. If you had asked him his age, he'd have given it at thirty-one, but he might have said twenty-five and been believed. He was bashful, and he got on better with men than he did with women. As to the morals, he smoked and he swore a good deal upon occasion, and he drank moderately, and he played pool, and now and then a little poker, and he would lie for a friend any time it was necessary, and think nothing of it. Also, he would fight whenever the occasion seemed to warrant it.

In short, he was just a human being, and no saint. Saint? You wouldn't think so if you had heard what he said to his horse, Rabbit, just about an hour before you were introduced to him.

Rabbit, it seems, had been pacing along, half asleep in the blistering heat of midday, among the cactus and the greasewood and those depressing, yellowish weeds that pretended to be clothing the desert with verdure, when they are merely emphasizing its barrenness. Starr had been half asleep, too, riding with one leg over the saddle horn, to rest his muscles, and with his hat brim pulled down over his eyebrows to shade his eyes from the pitiless glare of New Mexico sunlight. Rabbit might be depended upon to dodge the prairie-dog holes and rocks and dirt hummocks, day or night, waking or sleeping; and, since they were riding 'cross country, anyway, miles from a trail, and since they were headed for water, and Rabbit knew better than Starr just where the nearest was to be found, Starr held the reins slack in his thumb and finger and let the horse alone.

That was all right, up to a certain point. Rabbit was a perfectly dependable little range horse, and sensible beyond most horses. He was ambling along at his easy little fox trot that would carry Starr to many a mile in a day, and he had his eyes half shut against the sun glare, and his nose almost at a level with his knees, when a rattlesnake, coiled in the scant shade of a weed, lifted his tail and buzzed as stridently, as abruptly, as thirteen rattles and a button can buzz. Rabbit had been bitten once when he was a colt, and had gone around with his head swollen up like a barrel for days. He gave a great, horrified snort, heaved himself straight up in the air, whirled on his hind feet, and went bucking across the scenery like a rodeo outlaw.

Starr did not accompany him any part of the distance. Starr had gone off backward and landed on his neck. The first thing he did, when he got up, was to shoot the head off the snake, whose tail continued to buzz in a dreary, objectless way, when there was absolutely nothing to buzz about. Snakes are like that.

Starr was a little like that, also. He continued to cuss in a fretful, objectless way, even after Rabbit had stopped and waited for him with apology written in the very droop of his ears. When he had remounted, and the horse had settled again to his straight-backed, shuffling fox trot, Starr would frequently think of something else to say upon the subject of fool horses and snakes and long, dry miles and the interminable desert; but, since none of the things would bear repeating, we will let it go at that. The point is that Starr was no saint.

He knew of a spring where the water was sweet and cold, and where a lonesome young fellow lived by himself and was always glad to see some one ride up to his door. The young fellow was what is called a good feeder, and might be depended upon to have a pot of frijoles cooked, and sour-dough bread, and stewed fruit of some kind even in his leanest times, and at that consider himself next door to starvation. And if he happened to be in funds, there was no telling—Starr, for instance, had eaten canned plum pudding and potted chicken and maraschino cherries and gingersnaps, all at one sitting when he happened to strike the fellow just after selling a few sheep. Thinking of these things, Starr clucked to Rabbit and told him for gosh sake to pick his feet off the ground and not to take root and grow there in the desert like a several-kinds-of-a-so-and-so cactus.

Rabbit twitched back his ears to catch the drift of Starr's remarks, rattled his teeth in a bored yawn, and shuffled on. Starr laughed.

"Durn it, why is it you never take me serious?" he complained. "I can name over all the mean things you are, and you just waggle one ear, much as to say 'Aw, hell! Same ole tune, and nothing to it but noise.' Some of these days you're going to get your pedigree read to you—and read right!" He leaned forward and lovingly lifted Rabbit's mane, holding it for a minute or two away from the sweaty neck. "Sure's hot out here to-day, ain't it, pardner?" he murmured, and let the mane fall again into place. "Kinda fries out the grease, don't it? If young Calvert's got any hoss feed in camp, I'm going to beg some off him. Get along—the faster you go, the quicker you'll get there."

The desert gave place to scattered, brown cobblestones of granite. Rabbit picked his way carefully among these, setting his feet down daintily in the interstices of the rocks. He climbed a long slope, that proved itself to be a considerable hill when one looked back at the desert below. The farther side was more abrupt, and he took it in patient zigzags, where the footing promised some measure of security. At the bottom he turned short off to the right, and made his way briskly along a rough wagon trail that hugged the hillside.

"Fresh tracks going in—and then out again," Starr announced musingly to Rabbit. "Maybe young Calvert hired a load of grub brought out; that,

or he's had a visitor in the last day or two—maybe a week back, though; this dry ground holds tracks a long while. Go on—it's only a mile or so now."

The trail took a sudden turn toward the bottom of the wide depression as though it wearied of dodging rocks and preferred the loose sand below. Of his own accord, Rabbit broke into a steady lope, flinging his head sidewise now and then to discourage the pestiferous gnats that swarmed about his ears. Starr, also driven to action of some kind, began to fling his hands in long, sweeping gestures past his face. He hoped that the cabin, being on a higher bit of ground, would be free of the pests.

Rounding a sharp turn, Starr glimpsed the cabin, and frowned as something unfamiliar in its appearance caught his attention. For just a minute he could not name the change; and then, "Curtains at the windows!" he snorted. "Now, had the dub gone and got married, I wonder?" He hoped not, and his hope was born not so much from sympathy with any woman who must live in such a place, but from a very humanly selfish regard for his own passing comfort. With a woman in the cabin, Starr would not feel so free to break his journey there with a rest and a meal or two.

He went on, however, sitting passively in the saddle while Rabbit headed straight for the spring. The bit of white curtain at the one small, square window facing that way troubled him, though it could not turn him back thirsty into the desert.

It was Rabbit who, ignorant of the significance of that flapping bit of white, was taken unawares, and ducked sidewise when Helen May, standing precariously on a rock beside the spring, cupped her hands around her sun-cracked lips and shouted *"Vic!"* at the top of her voice. She nearly fell off the rock when she saw the horse and rider so close. They had come on her from behind, round another sharp nose of the rock-strewn hillside, so that she did not glimpse them until they had discovered her.

"Oh!" said Helen May quite flatly, dropping her hands from her sunburned face and looking Starr over with the self-poised, inquiring gaze of one who is accustomed to looking upon strange faces by the thousands.

"How do you do?" said Starr, lifting his hat and foregoing instinctively the easy "Howdy" of the plain. "Is —Mr. Calvert at home?"

"That depends," said Helen May, "on where he calls home. He isn't here, however."

Rabbit, not in the least confused by the presence of a girl in this out-of-the-way place, pushed forward and thrust his nose deep into the lower pool of the spring where the water was warmed a little by the sun on the rocks. Starr could not think of anything much to say, so he sat leaning forward with a hand on Rabbit's mane, and watched the muscles working along the neck when the horse swallowed.

"Oh—would you mind killing that beast down there in that little hollow?" Helen May had decided that it would be silly to keep on shouting for Vic when this man was here. "It's what they call a Gila monster, I think. A young one. And the bite is said to be fatal. I don't like the way he keeps looking at me. I believe he's getting ready to jump at me."

Starr glanced quickly at her face, which was perfectly serious and even a trifle anxious, and then down in the direction indicated by a broken-nailed, pointing finger. He did not smile, though he felt like it. He looked again at Helen May.

"It's a horned toad," he informed her gravely. "The one Johnny Calvert kept around for a pet, I reckon. He won't bite—but I'll kill it if you say so." He dismounted, and picked up a stone, and then looked at her again inquiringly.

Helen May eyed the toad askance. "Of course, if it's accustomed to being a pet—but it looks perfectly diabolical. It—came after me."

"It thought you would feed it, maybe."

"Well, I won't. It can think again,"

said Helen May positively. "You needn't kill it—but if you'd chase it off somewhere out of sight—it gives me shivers. I don't like the way it stares at a person, and blinks."

Starr went over and picked up the toad, holding it cupped between his palms. He carried it a hundred feet away, set it down gently on the farther side of a rock, and came back. "Lots of folks keep them for pets," he said. "They're harmless, innocent things."

He washed his hands in the pool where Rabbit had drunk, took the tin can that had stood on a ledge in the shade when Starr first came to the spring, a year ago, and dipped it full from the inner pool, that was always cool under the rocks. He turned his back to Helen May, and drank satisfyingly. The can was rusted, and it leaked a swift succession of drops that was almost a stream. Helen May decided that she would bring a white granite cup to the spring and throw the can away. It was unsanitary, and it leaked frightfully, and it was a disgrace to civilized thirst.

"Pretty hot, to-day," Starr observed, when he had emptied the can and put it back. He turned and pulled the reins up along Rabbit's neck and took the stirrup in his hand.

"Oh, won't you stop—for lunch? It's a long way to town." Helen May flushed behind her sunburn, but she felt that the law of the desert demanded some show of hospitality.

"Thanks—I must be getting on," said Starr, and touched his hat brim and rode away. He had a couple of fried-ham sandwiches in his pocket, and he ought to make the Medina Ranch by two o'clock, he reminded himself philosophically. A woman on Johnny Calvert's claim was disconcerting. What was she there for, anyway? From the way she spoke about Johnny, she couldn't be his wife—or, if she were, *she had a grudge against him.* She didn't look like the kind of a girl that would marry the Johnny Calvert kind of a man. Maybe she was just stopping there for a day or so, with her folks. Still, that white curtain at the window looked permanent, somehow.

Starr studied the puzzle from all angles. He might have stayed and had his curiosity satisfied—but it was second nature with Starr to hide any curiosity he might feel; his riding matter of factly away, as though the girl was a logical part of the place, was not at all bashfulness. Partly it was habit. He wondered who Vic was—man, woman, or child? Man, he guessed, since she was probably calling for help with the horned toad. Starr grinned when he thought of her naming it a Gila monster. If she had ever seen one of those babies—she must certainly be new to the country, since she didn't even know a horned toad when she saw one! What was she doing there, anyway? Starr meant to find out. It was his business to find out—and, besides, he wanted to know.

CHAPTER V.

Starr took his cigarette from his lips, sent an oblique glance of mental measurement toward his host, and shifted his saddle-weary person to a more comfortable position on the rawhide-covered couch. He had eaten his fill of frijoles and tortillas and a chili stew hot enough to crisp the tongue. He had discussed the price of sheep, and had, with much dickering, bought fifty dry ewes, at so much on foot, delivered at the nearest shipping point. He had given what news was public talk, of the great war and the supposedly present whereabouts of Villa, and what was guessed would happen if Mexican money went any lower.

On his own part, Estancio Medina —called Estan for short—had talked very freely of these things. Villa, he was a bad one, sure. He would yet make trouble if some*body* didn't catch him, yes. For himself, Estancio Medina, *he was glad to be on this side* the border, yes. The American gover'ment would let a poor man alone, yes. He could have his little home and his few sheeps, and no*body* would take them away. Villa, he was a bad one!

All Mexicans must sure hate Villa—even the men who did his fighting for him, yes. "Burros—that's what they are. Burros, that have no mind for thinking, only to do what is tol'. And, if tro'bles come, all Mexicans in these country fight for their homes, you bet. All these Mexicans knows what's good for them. They don't fight 'gainst these American gov'ment—not moch, they don' do that. They come here because they don' like it no more in Mexico, where no poor man can have a home like here. You bet." Estan Medina was willing to talk a long while on that subject. His mother, sitting just inside the doorway, nodded her head now and then and smiled just as though she knew what her son was saying; proud of his high learning, she was. He could talk with the Americanos, and they listened with respect. Their language he could speak, better than they could speak it themselves. Did she not know? She herself could now and then understand what he was talking about, he spoke so plainly.

"You've got new neighbors, I see," Starr observed irrelevantly, when Estan paused to relight his cigarette. "Over at Johnny Calvert's," he added, when his host looked at him inquiringly.

"Oh-h, yes! That poor boy and girl! You seen them?"

"I just came from there," Starr informed him easily. "What brought them away out here?"

"They not tell you, then? That Juan Calvert, he's a bad one, sure! He don' stay no more—too lazy, I think, to watch his sheeps from the coyotes, and says they're stole'. He comes here, telling me I got his sheeps—yes. We quarrel a little bit, maybe. I don' like to be called thief, you bet. He's big mouth, that feller—no brains, sure. Then he goes some*where,* and he tells what fine rancho he's got in Sunlight Basin. These boy and girl, they buy. That's too bad. They don' belong on these desert, sure. W'at they know about hard life? Pretty soon they get tired, I think, and go back where comes from. That boy—what for help he be to that girl? Jus' boy—not so old my brother Luis. Can't ride horse—goes *up* and down, *up* an' down, like hees back goes through hees hat. What that girl do? Jus' slim, big-eye girl, with soft hand and sickness of lungs. Babes, them boy and girl. Juan Calvert he should be shot dead for let such innocentes be fool like that."

"Where is Johnny Calvert?"

"Him? He's gone, sure! Not come back, I bet you! He's got money—them babes got ranch——" Estan lifted his shoulders eloquently.

"What are they going to do, now they're here?" Starr abstractedly wiped off the ash collar of his cigarette against the edge of the couch.

"Quién sabe?" countered Estan, and lifted his shoulders again. "I think pretty quick they go."

Starr looked at his watch, yawned, and rose with much evident reluctance. "Same here," he said. "I've got to make Bonito in time for that eastbound. You have the sheep in the stockyards by Saturday, will you? If I'm not there myself, I'll leave the money with Johnson, at the express office. Soon as the sheep's inspected, you can go there and get it. Adios. *Mucho gracias, señora.*"

"She likes you fine—my mother," Estan observed, as the two sauntered to the corral where Rabbit was stowing away as much *secate* as he could against future hunger. "Sometimes you come and stay longer. We not see so many peoples here. Nobody likes to cross desert when she's hot like this. Too bad you must go now."

Starr agreed with him, talked the usual small talk of the desert places while he placed the saddle on Rabbit's still-sweaty back. He went away down the rocky trail, with the sun shining full on his right cheek, and was presently swallowed up by the blank immensity of the land that looked level as a floor from a distance, but which was a network of small ridges and shallow draws and "dry washes" when one came to ride over it.

The trail was narrow, and had many inconsequential twists and turns in it, as though the first man to travel that

way had gone blind or dizzy and could not hold a straight line across the level. When an automobile, for instance, traveled that road, it was with many skiddings in the sand on the turns which it must take circumspectly if the driver did not care for the rocky, uneven floor of the desert itself.

Just lately some one had actually preferred to make his own trail, if tracks told anything. Within half a mile of the Medina rancho, Starr saw where an automobile had swerved sharply off the trail and had taken to the hard-packed sand of a dry arroyo that meandered barrenly off to the southeast. He turned and examined the trail over which he had traveled, saw that it offered no more discouragement to an automobile than any other bit of trail in that part of the country, and, with another glance at the yellow ribbon of road before him, he also swerved to the southeast.

For a mile the machine had labored, twisting this way and that to avoid rocky patches or deep cuts, where the spring freshets had dug out the looser soil. So far as Starr could discover, there was nothing to bring a machine up here. The arroyo was as thousands of other arroyos in that country. The sides sloped up steeply, or were worn into perpendicular banks. It led nowhere in particular; it was not a short cut to any place that he knew of. The trail to Medina's ranch was shorter and smoother—supposing Medina's ranch were the objective point of the trip.

Starr could not see any sense in it—and that is why he followed the tortuous track to where the machine had stopped. That it had stood there for some time he knew by the amount of oil that had leaked down into the sand. He did not know for certain, since he did not know the personal habits of that particular car, but he guessed that it had stood there for a couple of hours at least before the driver had backed and turned around to retrace his way to the trail.

In these days of gasoline travel one need not be greatly surprised to meet a car, or see the traces of one, in almost any out-of-the-way spot where four wheels can possibly be made to travel. On the other hand, the man at the wheel is not likely to send his machine careening over rocks and through sand where the traction is poor, and across dry ditches and among greasewood, just for the fun of driving. There is sport with rod or gun to lure, or there is necessity to impel, or the driver is lost and wants to reach some point that looks familiar—or he is trying to dodge something or somebody.

Starr sat beside that grease spot in the sand and smoked a cigarette and studied the surrounding hills, and tried to decide what had brought the car up here. Not sport, unless it was hunting of jack rabbits; and there were more jack rabbits out on the flat than here. There was no trout stream near—at least, none that was not more accessible from another point. To be sure, some tenderfoot tourist might have been told some yarn that brought him up here on a wild-goose chase. You can, thought Starr, expect any fool thing of a tourist. He remembered running across one that was trying, between trains, to walk across the mesa from Albuquerque to the Sandia Mountains. It had been hard to convince that particular specimen that he was not within a mile or so of his goal, and that he would do well to reach the mountains in another three hours or so of steady walking. Compared with that, driving a car up this arroyo did not look so foolish.

But tourists did not invade this particular locality with their overconfident inexperience, and Starr did not give that explanation much serious thought. Instead, he followed on up the narrowed gulch to higher ground, to see where men would be most likely to go from there. At the top he looked out upon further knobs and hollows and aimless depressions, just as he had expected. A mile or so away there drifted a thin spiral of smoke—from the kitchen stove of the Señora Medina, he guessed. But there was no other

sign of human life anywhere within the radius of five miles—or, to be explicit, within the field of Starr's vision.

He looked for footprints, but in a few minutes he gave up in disgust. The ridge he stood on stretched for miles—up beyond Medina's home ranch and down past the Somers' ranch, five or six miles nearer town, and on to the railroad—and it was a rocky ridge, if ever there was one; granite outcroppings, cobblestones, bowlders, anything but good loose soil, where tracks might be followed. A dog might have followed a trail there before the scent was baked out by blistering heat; but Starr certainly could not.

He stood looking across to where the smoke curled up into the intense blue of the sky. If a man wanted to reach the Medina rancho by the most obscure route, he thought, this would be one way to get there. He went back to where the automobile had stood, and searched there for some sign of those who had ridden this far. But if any man left that machine, he had stepped from the running board upon rock, and so had left no telltale print of his foot.

"And that looks mighty darn queer," said Starr, "if it was just accidental. But if a fellow *wanted* to take to the rocks to cover his trail, why—he couldn't pick a better place than this. She's a dandy ridge and a dandy way to get up on her, if that's what's wanted."

Starr looked at his watch, and gave up all hope of catching the next eastbound train—if that had really been his purpose. He lifted his hat and drew his fingers across his forehead, where the perspiration stood in beads, resettled the hat at an angle to shade his face from the glare of the sun, ran two fingers cursorily between the cinch and Rabbit's sweaty body, picked up the stirrup, and thrust his toe and eased himself up into the saddle; and his mind had not consciously directed a single movement.

"Well, they've left one mark behind 'em that fair hollers," he stated, in so satisfied a tone that Rabbit turned his head and looked back at him inquiringly. Starr, you must know, was not given to satisfied tones when he and Rabbit were enduring the burden of heat and long miles. "And you needn't give me that kinda look, neither. Take a look at them tire tracks, you ole knothead. Them's Silvertown cords—and they ain't equipping jitneys with Silvertowns—not yet, anyway. Why, yore whole carcass ain't worth the price uh one tire, let alone four, you old sheep. You show me the car in this country that's sportin' Silvertowns all around, and I'll show you——"

Just what he would show, Starr did not say, because he did not know. But there was something there which might be called a mystery—and where there was mystery there was Starr, working tirelessly on the solution. This might be a trivial thing; but until he knew beyond all doubt that it was trivial, Starr pushed other matters—such as a young woman afraid of a horned toad—out of his mind, that he might study the puzzle from all possible angles.

CHAPTER VI.

Helen May stood on the knobby, brown rock pinnacle that formed the head of Sunlight Basin, and stared resentfully out over the baked desert and the forbidding hills and the occasional grassy hollows that stretched away and away to the sky line. So clear was the air that every slope, every hollow, every acarpous hilltop pitilessly revealed to her unfriendly eyes, until the sheer immensity of distance veiled its barrenness in a haze of tender violet. The sky was blue; deeply, intensely blue, with little clouds like flakes of bleached cotton floating aimlessly here and there. In a big, wild, unearthly way it was beautiful beyond any words which human beings have coined.

Helen May felt its bigness, its wildness—perhaps, also, its beauty, though the beauties of the desert land do not always appeal to alien eyes. She felt its bigness and its wildness; and she, who had lived the cramped life of the town, resented both, because she had

no previous experience by which to measure any part of it. Also, she summed up all her resentment and her complete sense of bafflement at its bigness in one vehement sentence, that lacked only one word of being a curse.

"*Darn* such a country!" is what she said, gritting the words between her teeth.

"See anything of 'em?" bellowed Vic from the spring, where he was engaged in dipping up water with a tomato can and pouring it over his head, shivering ecstatically as the cold trickles ran down his neck.

Helen May glanced down at him with no softening of her eyes. Vic had lost nine goats out of the flock he had been set to herd, and he failed to manifest any great concern over the loss. On the contrary, he had told Helen May that he wished he could lose the whole bunch, and that he hoped coyotes had eaten them up, if they didn't have sense enough to stay with the rest. There had been a heated argument, and Helen May had not felt sure of coming out of it a victor.

"No, I don't, and you'd better get back to work, or the rest will be gone, too," she called down to him petulantly. "It's bad enough to lose nine, without letting the rest go."

"Aw, 'smatter with yuh, anyway?" Vic retorted in a tone he did not think would reach her ears. "By gosh, you don't want a feller to cool off, even! By gosh, you'd make a feller *sleep* with them darned goats if you could get away with it! Buh-lieve *me,* anybody can have my job that wants it. 'S hot enough to fry eggs in the shade, and she thinks, by hen, that I oughta stay out there——"

"Yes, I do. And if you want anything to eat to-night, Vic Stevenson, you get right back there with those goats! They're going over the hill this minute. Hurry, Vic! For Heaven's sake, are you trying to take a *bath* in that can? Climb up that ridge and cut across and head them off! That old billy's headed for town again—hurry!"

"Aw, for gosh sake!" grumbled Vic, stooping reluctantly to pick up the old hoe handle he used for a staff. "What ridge?" He paused to thunder after her, his voice unexpectedly changing to a shrill falsetto on the last word, as frequently happens to rob a man cub of his dignity just when he needs it most.

"That ridge before your face, chump," Helen May informed him crossly. "If it comes to choosing between goats and a boy, I'll take the goats! And if there's any spot on the face of the earth worse than this, I'd like to know where it is. The idea of expecting people to *live* in such a country! It looks for all the world like magnified pictures of the moon's surface. And," she added, with a dreary kind of resignation, "it's here, and I'm here. I can't get away from it—that's the dickens of it!" Then, because Helen May had a certain impish sense of humor, she sat down and laughed at the incongruity of it all. "Me—*me,* here, in the desert, trying to raise goats!" she made another summing-up of her resentment. "Can you beat that?"

She watched Vic toiling up the ridge, using the hoe handle with a slavish dependence upon its support that tickled Helen May again. "You'd think," she told the scenery, for want of other companionship, "you'd think Vic was seventy-nine years old at the very least. Makes a difference whether he's after a bunch of tame goats or hiking with a bunch of boy scouts to the top of Mount Wilson! I don't believe that kid ever did wear his legs out having fun—and it's a sure thing he'll never wear them out working! Say goats to him, and he actually gets round-shouldered and limps."

Vic disappeared over the ridge beyond the spring. Lower down, where the ridge merged into the Basin itself, the big, curly-horned Billy, that had cost Helen May more than any half dozen of his followers, stepped out briskly at the head of the band. Helen May wondered what new depravity was in his mind, and whether Vic would cross the gully he was in and

confront Billy in time to change the one idea that seemed always to possess that animal. Helen May did not know how vitally important it is to have a good dog at such work. She did not know that Billy and his band felt exactly like boys who have successfully eluded a too-lax teacher, and that they would have yielded without argument to the bark of a trained sheep dog. She had set Vic a harder task than she realized; a task from which any experienced herder would have shrunk. In her ignorance she blamed Vic, and called him lazy and careless and a few other sisterly epithets which he did not altogether deserve.

She watched now, impatient because he was so long in crossing the gully; telling herself that he was trying to see how slow he could be, and that he did it just to be disagreeable and to irritate her—as if she were there of her own desire, and had bought those two hundred miserable goats to spite him. Harmony, as you must see, did not always dwell in Sunlight Basin.

Eventually Vic toiled up the far side of the gully—which was deep and as hot as an oven—and followed it down within rock-throwing distance of the goats. A well-aimed pebble struck Billy on the curve of one horn, and halted him, the band huddling, vacant-eyed, behind him. Vic threw another, and Billy, turning his whiskered face upward, stared with resentful head tossings and a defiant blat or two before he swerved back into the Basin, his band and Vic plodding after.

"Well, for a wonder!" Helen May ejaculated ungraciously, grudging Vic the small tribute of praise that was due him. But she was immediately ashamed of that, and told herself that it was pretty hard on the poor kid, and that, after all, he must hate the country worse than she did, even—which would certainly mean a good deal; and that she supposed he missed his boy chums just as much as she missed her friends, and found it just as hard to fit himself comfortably into a life for which he had no liking. Besides, it wasn't *his* health that had shunted them both out here into the desert, and she ought to be ashamed of herself for treating him the way she did.

After that she decided that it was her business to find the nine goats that were lost. Vic certainly could not do both at once; and deep down in her heart Helen May knew that she was terribly afraid of Billy, and would rather trudge the desert for hours under the hot sun than stay in the Basin, watching the main flock. She wished that she could afford to hire a herder, but she shrank from the expense. It seemed to her that she and Vic should be able to herd that one band, especially since there was nothing else for them to do out there, except cook food and eat it.

Speaking of food, it seemed to take an enormous quantity to satisfy the hunger of two persons. Helen May was appalled at the insatiable appetite of Vic, who seemed never to have enough in his stomach. As for herself—well, she recalled the meal she had just eaten, and wondered how it could be possible for hunger to seize upon her so soon again. But, even so, food could not occupy all of their time, and a two-room cabin does not take much keeping in order. They would simply be throwing away money if they hired a herder—and yet, how they both did loathe those goats!

She climbed back down the pinnacle, watching nervously for snakes and lizards and horned toads and such denizens of the desert. With a certain instinct for preparing against the worst, she took a two-quart canteen, such as soldiers carry, to the spring, and filled it and slung it over her shoulder. She went to the cabin and made a couple of sandwiches; and, because she was not altogether inhuman, she cut two thick slices of bread, spread them lavishly with jam, and carried them to Vic as a peace offering.

"I'm going to hunt those nasty brutes, Vic," she cried, from a safe distance. "Come here and get this jam sandwich, and lend me that stick you've got. And if I don't get back by five, you start a fire."

"Where you going to look? If you couldn't see 'em from up there, I don't see the use of hunting." Vic was taking long steps toward the sandwich, and he stretched his sunburned face in that grin which might have made him famous in comedy had fate not set him down before his present ignoble task. "Yuh don't want to go far," he advised her perfunctorily. "We ought to have a couple of saddle horses. Why don't yuh——"

"What would we feed them on? Besides, we've got to save what money we've got, Vic. We can walk till these insects grow wool enough to pay for something to ride on."

"Hair, you mean. I can get a gentle horse from that Mexican kid, Luis Medina. He good as offered us one—that one I borrowed——" Vic was giving too much attention to the jam sandwich to argue very coherently.

"There's that old Billy starting off again—you watch him, Vic. Don't let him get a start, or goodness knows where he'll head for next. We can't feed a horse, I tell you. We need all this grass for the goats."

"Oh, darn the goats!"

In her heart Helen May quite agreed with the sentiment, but she could not consistently betray that fact to Vic. She therefore turned her back upon him, walking down the trail that led out of the Basin to the main trail, a mile away; the trail which was the one link connecting them with civilization.

Here passed the weather-scarred, dust-covered stage three times a week. Here, in a macaroni box mounted on a post, they received and posted their mail. Helen May had indulged herself in a subscription to the Los Angeles daily paper that had always been left at their door every morning, the paper which Peter had read hastily over his morning mush. Every paper brought a pang of homesickness for the flower-decked city of her birth, but she felt as though she could not have kept her sanity without it. The full-page bargain ads she read hungrily. The weekly announcements of the movie shows, the news, the want columns—these were at once her solace and her torment; and if you have ever been exiled, you know what that means.

Here, at the macaroni box, she left her shopping list and money for the stage driver, who bought what she needed, and left the goods at the foot of the post, and what money remained in a buckskin bag in the box. An obliging stage driver was he; a tobacco-chewing, red-faced, red-whiskered stage driver, who nagged at his four horses incessantly and never was known to beat one of them; a garrulous, soft-hearted stage driver, who understood very well how lonely these two young folks must be, and who therefore had some moth-eaten joke ready for whoever might be waiting for him at the macaroni box. Whenever Helen May apologized for the favor she must ask of him—which was every time she handed him a list—the stage driver invariably gave a nasal kind of snort, spat far out over the wheel, and declared pettishly: "It ain't a mite uh trouble in the world. That's what I'm *fur*—to help folks out along my rowt. Don't you worry a mite about that." Often as he said it, he yet gave it the tone of sincerity and of convincing freshness, as though he had never before given the matter a thought. Helen May did not know what she would have done without that stage driver to bridge the gulf between Sunlight Basin and the world.

But this was not "stage day." That is to say, the stage had passed to the far side of its orbit, and would not return until to-morrow. From San Bonito it swung in a day-long journey across the desert to Malpais, thence by a different route to San Bonito again, so that Helen May never saw it returning whence it had come. A cloud of desert dust always heralded its approach from the east. Sometimes after the first dust signal it took him nearly an hour to top the low ridge which was really one rim of the Basin. Then Helen May would know that he carried passengers or freight, that straightened the backs of the straining

four horses in the long stretch of sand beyond the ridge, and made their progress slow.

But to-day there was no dust signal, and the macaroni box was but a dismal reminder of her exile. The world was very far away, behind the violet rim of mountains, and she was just a speck in the desert. Her high-laced boots were heavy, and the dust settled back in the creases around her slim ankles —that could be perfectly fascinating in silken hose and dainty slippers. Her khaki shirt—of the divided kind, much affected by tourists—had lost two big, pearl buttons, and she had no others to replace them. Her shirt waist had its collar turned inside for coolness, and the hollow of her neck was sunblistered and beginning to peel. Also her nose and her neck at the sides were showing a disposition to grow new skin for old. So much had the desert sun done for her.

But there was something else which the desert had done, something which Helen May did not fully realize. It had put a clear, steady look into her eyes in place of the glassy shine of fever. It was beginning to fill out that hollow in her neck, so that it no longer showed the angular ends of her collar bones. It had put a resilient quality into her walk, firmness into the poise of her head. It had made it physically possible, for instance, for Helen May to trudge out into the wild to hunt nine goats that had strayed from the main band.

Though she did not know it, a certain dream of Peter's had very nearly come true. For here were the vast plains, unpeopled, pure, immutable in their magnificent calm. At night the stars seemed to come down and hang just over Helen May's head. There was the little cottage of which Peter had dreamed—only Helen May called it a miserable little shack—hunched against a hill; sometimes a candle winked through the window at the stars; sometimes Helen May was startled at the nearness and the shrill insistence of the coyotes. Here, as Peter had dreamed so longingly and so hopelessly, were distance and quiet and calm. And here was Helen May coming through the sunlight—Peter never dreamed how hot it would be!—with her deep-gold hair tousled in the wind and with the little red spots gone from her cheeks, and with health in her eyes that were the color of a ripe chestnut. When her skin had adjusted itself to the rigors of the climate, she would no doubt have freckles on her nose, just as Peter had dreamed she might have. And if she were walking, instead of riding the gentle-eyed pony which Peter had pictured, that was not Peter's fault, nor the fault of the dream. There was no laugh on her lips, however. Dreams always pull a veil of idealism over the face of reality, and so Helen May's face was not happy, as Peter had dreamed it might be, but petulant and grimly determined; and her ripe-red lips were moving in anathemas directed at nine detested goats.

Peter could never have dreamed just that—but all the same it is a pity that, in order to make the dream a reality, Peter had been forced to deny himself the joy of seeing Helen May growing strong in "Arizona, New Mexico, or Colorado." It would have made the price he paid seem less terrible, less tragic.

CHAPTER VII.

Just out from the entrance to a deep, broad-bottomed arroyo, where an automobile had turned in from the road, Starr came upon something that surprised him very much—and it was not easy to surprise Starr at all. Here, in the first glory of a flaming sunset that turned the desert to a sea of unearthly, opal-tinted beauty, he came upon Helen May trudging painfully along, with an old hoe handle for a staff, and driving nine reluctant nanny goats, that alternately trotted and stood still, to stare at the girl with foolish, amber-colored eyes.

Starr was trained to long desert distances, but his training had made it second nature to consider a horse the logical means of covering those dis-

tances. To find Helen May away out here, eight miles and more from Sunlight Basin, and to find her walking, shocked Starr unspeakably; shocked him out of his shyness and into free speech with her, as though he had known her a long while.

"Y' *lost?*" was his first greeting, while he instinctively swung Rabbit to head off a goat that suddenly "broke back" from the others.

Helen May looked up at him with relief struggling through the apathy of utter weariness. "No—but I might as well be. I'll never be able to get home alive, anyhow." She shook the hoe handle menacingly at a hesitating goat, and quite suddenly collapsed upon the nearest rock and began to cry; not sentimentally or weakly or in any other feminine manner known to Starr, but with an angry recklessness that was like opening a safety valve. Helen May herself did not understand why she should go along for half a day calmly enough, and then, the minute this man rode up and spoke to her sympathetically, she should want to sit down and cry.

"I just—I've been walking since one o'clock! If I had a gun I'd shoot every one of them. I just—I think goats are simply *damnable* things!"

Starr turned and looked at the animals disapprovingly. "They sure are," he assented comfortingly. "Where you trying to take 'em—or ain't you?" he asked, with the confidence-inviting tone that made him so valuable to those who paid for his services.

"Home—if you can call it that!" Helen May found her handkerchief and proceeded to wipe the tears and the dust off her cheeks. She looked at Starr more attentively than at first, when he had been just a human being who seemed friendly. "Oh, you're the man that stopped at the spring. Well, you know where I live, then. I was hunting these—they wandered off, and Vic couldn't find them yesterday, so I —it was just accident that I came across them. I followed some tracks, and it looked to me as if they'd been driven off. There were horse tracks. That's what made me keep going—I was so mad. And now they won't go home or anywhere else. They just want to run around every which way."

Starr looked up the arroyo, hesitating. On the edge of San Bonito he had picked up the track of Silvertown cord tires, and he had followed it to the mouth of this arroyo. From certain signs, easy for an experienced man to read, he had known the track was fairly fresh; fresh enough to make it worth his while to follow. And now here was a girl, all tired out and a long way from home——

"Here, you climb on Rabbit. He's gentle when he knows it's all right, and I won't stand for him acting up." Starr swung off beside her. "I'll help get the goats home. Where's your dog?"

"I haven't any dog. The man we bought the goats from wanted to sell me one, to help herd them, he said. But he asked twenty-five dollars for it—I suppose he thought because I looked green I'd stand for that!—and I wouldn't be held up that way. Vic and I have nothing to do but watch them. You—you mustn't bother," she added half-heartedly. "I can get them home all right. I'm rested now—and there's a moon, you know. Really, I can't let you bother about it. I know the way."

"Put your foot in the stirrup and climb on. You, Rabbit, you stand still or I'll beat the——"

"Really, you mustn't think, because I cried a little bit——"

"Pile onto him now, while I hold him still. Or shall I pick you up and *put* you on?" Starr smiled while he said it, but there was a look in his eyes and around his mouth that made Helen May yield suddenly.

By her awkwardness Starr and Rabbit both knew that she had probably never before attempted to mount a horse. By the set of her lips Starr knew that she was afraid, but that she would break her neck before she would confess her fear. He liked her for that, and he was glad to see that Rabbit understood the case, and drew upon his reserve of patience and

good nature, standing like a rock until Helen May was settled in the saddle and Starr had turned the stirrups on their sides in the leathers, so that they would come nearer being the right length for her. Starr's hand, sliding affectionately up Rabbit's neck, and resting a moment on his jaw, was all the assurance the horse needed that everything was all right.

"Now, just leave the reins loose, and let Rabbit come along to please himself," Starr instructed her quietly. "He'll follow me, and he'll pick his own trail. You don't have to do a thing but sit there and take it easy. He'll do the rest."

Helen May looked at him doubtfully, but she did not say anything. She braced herself in the stirrups, took a firm grip of the saddle horn with one hand, and waited for what might befall. She had no fear of Starr, no further uneasiness over the coming night, the loneliness, the goats, or anything else. She felt as irresponsible, as safe as any sheltered woman in her own home. She did not feel serene—she did not know yet how the horse would perform; but she seemed to lay that responsibility also on Starr's capable shoulders.

They moved off quietly enough, Starr afoot, and driving the goats, Rabbit picking his way after him in leisurely fashion. So they crossed the arroyo mouth and climbed the ragged lip of its western side and traveled straight toward the flaming eye of the sun that seemed now to have winked itself nearly shut. The goats, for some inexplicable reason, showed no further disposition to go in nine different directions at once. Helen May relaxed from her stiff-muscled posture and began to experiment a little with the reins.

"Why, he steers easier than an automobile!" she exclaimed suddenly. "You just *think* which way you want to go, almost, and he does it. And you don't have to pull the lines the least bit, do you?"

Starr delayed his answer until he had made sure that she was not irritating Rabbit with a too-officious guidance. When he saw that she was holding the reins loosely, as he had told her to do, and was merely laying the weight of a rein on one side of the neck and then the other, he smiled.

"I guess you've rode before," he hazarded. "The way you neck rein ——"

"No, honest. But my chum's brother had a big six, and Sundays he used to let me fuss with it, away out where the road was clear. It steered just like this horse; just as easy, I mean. I—why see! I just *wondered* if he'd go to the right of that bush, and he turned that way just as if I'd told him to. Can you beat that?"

Starr did not say. Naturally—since she was a girl, and pretty, and since he was human—he was busy wondering what her chum's brother was like. He picked up a small rock and shied it at a goat that was not doing a thing it shouldn't do, and felt better. He remembered then that, at any rate, her chum's brother was a long way off, and that he himself had nothing much to complain of right now. Then Helen May spoke again, and shifted his thoughts to another subject.

"I believe I'd rather have a horse like this," she said, "than own that big, lovely, take-me-to-glory car that was pathfinding around like a million dollars, a little while ago. I'll own up now that I was weeping partly because four great, big porky men could ride around on cushions a foot thick, while a perfectly nice girl had to plow through the sand, afoot. The way they skidded past me and buried me in a cloud of dust made me mad enough to throw rocks after them. Pigs!—they never even stopped to ask if I wanted a ride or anything. They all glared at me through their goggles as if I hadn't any busines walking on their desert."

"Did you know them?" Starr came and walked beside her, glancing frequently at her face.

"No, of course I didn't. I don't know anybody but the stage driver. I wouldn't have ridden with them, anyway. From what I saw of them, they

looked like Mexicans. But you'd think they might have shown some interest, wouldn't you?"

"I sure would," Starr stated, with emphasis. "What kinda car was it, did you notice? Maybe I know who they are."

"Oh, it was a great big black car. They went by so fast, and I was so tired and hot and—and pretty near swearing mad, I didn't notice the number at all. And they were glaring at me, and I was glaring at them, and then the driver stepped on the accelerator just at a little crook in the road, and the hind wheels skidded about a ton of sand into my face—and they were gone, like they were running from a speed cop. I'd much rather have a nice little automatic pony like this one," she added feelingly. "You don't have to bundle yourself up in dusters and goggles and things when you take a ride, do you? It—it makes the bigness of the country, and the barrenness of it, somehow fit together, and take you into the pattern, when you ride a horse over it, don't you think?"

"I guess *so*," Starr assented, with an odd little slurring accent on the last word which gave the trite sentence an individual touch that appealed to Helen May. "It don't seem natural, somehow, to walk in a country like this."

"Oh, and you've got to, while I ride your horse! Or, have you got to? Is it just movie stuff, where a man rides behind on a horse, and lets the girl ride in front? I mean, is it feasible, or just a stunt for pictures?"

"Depends on the horse," Starr evaded. "It's got the say-so, mostly, whether it'll pack one person or two. Rabbit will, and, when I get tired walking, I'll ride."

"Oh, that makes it better. I wasn't feeling comfortable riding—but men are so queer about thinking they must give a woman all the choice bits of comfort; and a woman has to give in, or row about it. If you'll climb up and ride when you feel like it, I'll just settle down and enjoy myself."

Settling down and enjoying herself seemed to consist of gazing out over the desert and the hills and up at the sky, that was showing the deep purple of dusk. It was what Starr wanted most of all, just then, for it left him free to study what she had told him of the big, black automobile, with four coated and goggled men, who had looked like Mexicans; four men who had glared at her and then had speeded up, to get away from her possible scrutiny.

For the first time since she had seen it from the seat of a jolting spring wagon from the one livery stable in Malpais, Helen May discovered that this wild, strange land was beautiful. For the first time she gloried in its bigness and its wildness, and did not resent its barrenness. The little brown birds that fluttered close to the ground and cheeped wistfully to one another in the dusk gave her an odd, sweet thrill of companionship. Jack rabbits sitting up on their hind legs for a brief scrutiny before they scurried away, made her laugh to herself. The reddened clouds that rimmed the purple were like the radiant shores of a wonderful, bottomless sea, and the stars were mast lights on ships hull down in the distance. She lifted her chest and drew in long breaths of clean, sweet air that is like no other air, and she remembered all at once that she had not coughed since daylight. She breathed again, deep and long, and felt that she was drawing some wonderful, healing ether into her lungs.

She looked at Starr, walking steadily along before her, swinging the hoe handle lightly in his right hand, setting his feet down in the smoothest spots always, and leaving a clear imprint of his foot in the sandy soil. There was a certain fascination in watching the line of footprints he left behind him. She would know those footprints anywhere, she told herself. Small for a man they were, and well-shaped, with the toes pointing out the least bit, and with no biurring drag when he lifted his feet. She did not know that Starr wore riding boots made to his measure and costing close to twenty dollars a

pair; if she had, she would not have wondered at the fine shape of them, nor at the individuality of the imprint they made. She conceived the belief that Rabbit knew those footprints also. She amused herself by watching how carefully the horse followed wherever they led. If Starr stepped to the right to avoid a rock, Rabbit stepped to the right to avoid that rock; never to the left, though the way might be as smooth and open. If Starr crossed a gully at a certain place, Rabbit followed scrupulously the tracks he made. Helen May considered that this little gray horse showed really human intelligence.

She realized the deepening dusk only when Starr's form grew vague and she could no longer see the prints his boots made. They were drawing nearer to the brown, lumpy ridge which hid Sunlight Basin from the plain, but Helen May was not particularly eager to reach it. For the first time she forgot the gnawing heart hunger of homesickness, and was content with her present surroundings; content even with the goats, that trotted submissively ahead of Starr.

When a soft radiance drifted into the darkness, and made it a luminous, thin veil, Helen May gave a little cry, and looked back. Since her hands moved with the swing of her shoulders, Rabbit turned sharply and, startled, displeased, but obedient, faced the way she was looking. Starr stopped abruptly and turned back, coming close up beside her.

"What's wrong?" he asked, in an undertone. "See anything?"

"The moon." Helen May gave a hushed little laugh. "I'd forgotten—forgotten I was alive, almost. I was just soaking in the beauty of it through every pore, almost. And then it got dark, so I couldn't see your footprints any more, and then such a queer, beautiful look came on everything. I turned to look, and this little automatic pony turned to look, too. But—isn't it wonderful? Everything, I mean. Just everything—the whole world and the stars and the sky——"

Starr lifted an arm and laid it over Rabbit's neck, fingering the silver-white mane absently. It brought him quite close to Helen May, so that she could have put her hand on Starr's shoulder.

"Yes. It's wonderful—when it ain't terrible," he said, his voice low.

After a silent minute she answered him, in the hushed tone that seemed most in harmony with the tremendous sweep of sky and that great stretch of plain and bare mountain. "I see what you mean. It is terrible even when it's most wonderful. But one little human alone with it would be ——"

"Sh-sh!" he whispered. "Listen a minute. Did you ever *hear* a big silence like this?"

"No," she breathed eagerly. "Sh-sh——"

At first there was nothing save the whisper of a breeze, that stirred the greasewood and then was still. Full in their faces the moon swung clear of the mountains behind San Bonito, and hung there a luminous, yellow ball in the deep, star-sprinkled purple. Across the desert it flung a faint, straight pathway in the sand. Rabbit gave a long sigh, turned his head to look back at his master, and then stood motionless again. Far on a hilltop a coyote pointed his nose to the moon and yap-yap-yapped, with a shrill, long-drawn, tremolo wail that made the girl catch her breath. Behind them the nine goats moved closer together, and huddled there, afraid, beside a clump of bushes. The little breeze whispered again. A night bird called in a hurried, frightened way, and upon the last notes came the eerie cry of a little night owl.

The girl's face was uplifted, delicately lighted by the moon. Her eyes shone dark with those fluttering, sweet wraiths of thoughts which we may not prison in speech—which words only deaden and crush into vapid sentimentalism. Life, held in a great, unutterable calm, seemed to lie out there in the radiant, vague distance, asleep and smiling cryptically while it slept.

Her eyes turned to Starr, whose name she did not know; who had twice

come riding out of the distance to do her some slight service before he rode on into the distance that seemed as vast. Who was he? What petty round of duties and pleasures made up his daily, intimate life? She did not know. She did not feel the need of knowing.

Standing there with his thin face turned to the moon so that she saw, clean-cut against the night, his strong profile; with one arm thrown across the neck of his horse and his big hat tilted back so that she could see the heavy, brown hair that framed his fine forehead; with the look of a dreamer in his eyes and the wistfulness of the lonely on his lips, he seemed to her a part of the desert and its mysteries. She could picture him living alone somewhere in its wild fastnesses, aloof from the little things of life. He seemed to epitomize vividly the meaning of a song she had often sung unmeaningly:

> From the desert I come to thee,
> On my Arab shod with fire,
> And the winds are left behind
> In the speed of my desire.

While she looked—while the words of that old Bedouin love song thrummed through her memory, quite suddenly Starr began to sing, taking up the song where her memory had brought her:

> "Till the sun grows cold—
> And the stars are old—
> And the leaves of the judgment book unfold——"

Softly he sang, as though he had forgotten that she was there. Softly, but with a resonant, vibrating quality that made the words alive and quivering with meaning.

Helen May caught her breath. How did he know she was thinking that song? How did he chance to take it up just at the point where her memory had carried it? Had he read her mind? She stared at him, her lips parted; wondering, a little awed, but listening and thrilling to the human sweetness of his tones. And when he had sung the last yearning note of primitive desire, Starr turned his head and looked into her eyes.

Helen May felt as though he had taken her in his arms and kissed her lingeringly. Yet he had not moved except to turn his face toward her. She could not look away—could not even try to pull her eyes from him. It was as though she yielded. She felt suffocated, though her breath came quickly, a little unevenly.

Starr looked away, across the desert, where the moon lighted it whitely. It was as though he had released her. She felt flustered, disconcerted. She could not understand herself or him, or the primary forces that had moved them both. And why had he sung that Bedouin love song just as she was thinking it as something that explained him and identified him with the night? It was mysterious as the desert itself lying there so quiet under the moon. It was weird as the cry of the coyote. It was uncanny as spirit rappings. But she could not feel any resentment; only a thrill that was part pleasure and part pain. She wondered if he had felt the same; if he knew. But she could not bring herself to face even the thought of asking him. It was like the night silence around them: speech would dwarf and cheapen and distort——

Rabbit lifted his head again, perking his ears forward toward a new sound that had nothing weird or mysterious about it; a sound that was essentially earthy, material, modern: the distant purr of a high-powered automobile on the trail away to their right. Starr turned his face that way, listening as the horse listened. It seemed to Helen May as though he, too, had become again earthy and material and modern, with the desert love song but the fading memory of a dream. He listened, and she received the impression that something more than idle curiosity held him intent upon the sound.

The purring persisted, lessened, grew louder again. Starr still looked that way, listening intently. The machine swept nearer, so that the clear night air carried the sounds distinctly to where they stood. Starr even caught the humming of the rear gears, and knew that only now and then does a

machine have that peculiar, droning hum. Starr studied it, tried to impress the sound upon his memory.

The trail looped around the head of a sandy draw, and wound over the crest of a low ridge before it straightened out for a three-mile level run toward San Bonito, miles away. In walking, Starr had cut straight across that gully and the loop, so that they had crossed the trail twice in their journey thus far, and were still within half a mile of the head of the loop. They should have been able to see the lights, or at least the reflection of them on the ridge when the car came to the draw. But there was no bright path on sky or earth.

They heard the car ease down the hill, heard the grind of the gears as the driver shifted to the intermediate for the climb that came after. They heard the chug of the engine taking the steep grade. Then they should have caught the white glare of the headlights as the car topped the ridge. Starr knew that nothing obstructed the view—that in daylight they could have seen the yellow-brown ribbon of trail where it curved over the ridge. The machine was coming directly toward them for a short distance, but there was no light whatever. Starr knew then that whoever they were, they were running without lights.

"Well, I guess we'd better be ambling along," he said casually, when the automobile had purred its way beyond hearing. "It's three or four miles yet, and you're tired."

"Not so much." Helen May's voice was a little lower than usual, but that was the only sign she gave of any recent deep emotion. "I'd as soon walk a while and let you ride." She shrank now from the thought of both riding.

"When you've ridden as far as I have," said Starr, "you'll know it's a rest to get down and travel afoot for a few miles." He might have added that it would have been a rest had he not been hampered by those high-heeled riding boots, but consideration for her mental ease did not permit him to mention it. He said no more, but started the goats ahead of him and kept them moving in a straight line for Sunlight Basin. As before, Rabbit followed slavishly in his footsteps, nose dropped to the angle of placid acceptance, ears twitching forward and back so that he would lose no slightest sound.

Helen May fell again under the spell of the desert and the moon. Starr, walking steadily through the white-lighted barrenness, with his shadow always moving like a ghost before him, fitted once more into the desert. Again she repeated mentally the words of the song:

Let the night winds touch thy brow
  With the breath of my burning sigh,
And melt thee to hear the vow
  Of a love that shall not die—
  Of a love that shall not die!

Till the sun grows cold—
And the stars are old,
And the leaves of the judgment book unfold——

And now the lines sang themselves through her brain with the memory of Starr's voice. But Starr did not sing again, though Helen May, curious to know if her thoughts held any power over him, gazed intently at his back and willed him to sing. She finally descended weakly to the more direct influence of humming the air softly—but not too softly for him to hear.

Starr paid no attention whatever. He seemed to be thinking deeply—but he did not seem to be thinking of Helen May, nor of desert love songs. Helen May continued to watch him, but she was piqued at his calm indifference. Why, she told herself petulantly, he paid more attention to those goats than he did to her—and one would think, after that song and that look—— But there she stopped, precipitately retreating from thought of that look.

He was a queer fellow, she told herself, with careful tolerance and a little condescension. A true product of the desert; as changeable and as sphinx-like and as impossible from any personal, human standpoint. Look how beautiful the desert could be—how terribly uplifting and calm and—and *big*. Yet to-morrow it might be either a

burning waste of heat and sand and bare rock, or it might be a howling waste of wind and sand—if one of those sand storms came up. To herself she called him the Man of the Desert, and she added the word mysterious. After a moment she also added two lines of the song, because they fitted exactly her conception of him as she knew him. The lines were these:

> From the desert I come to thee
> On my Arab shod with fire.

This, in spite of the fact that Rabbit had none of the fiery traits of an Arabian steed, nor could he by any stretch of the imagination be accused of being shod with fire—he who planted his hoofs so sedately! Shod with velvet would have come nearer describing him.

So Helen May, who was something of a dreamer when Life let her alone long enough, rode home through the moonlight and wove cloth of gold from the magic of the night, and with the fairy fabric she clothed Starr—who was, as we know, just an ordinary human being—so that he walked before her, not as a plain, ungrammatical, sometimes profane young man, who was helping her home with her goats, but a mysterious, romantic figure evolved somehow out of the vastness in which she lived; who would presently recede again into the mysterious wild whence he had come.

It was foolish. She knew that it was foolish. But she had been living rather harshly and rather materially for some time, and she hungered for the romance of youth. Starr was the only person who had come to her untagged by the sordid, everyday, petty details of life. It did not hurt him to be idealized; but it might have hurt Helen May a little to know that he was pondering so earthy a subject as a big, black automobile careering without lights across the desert, and carrying four men who looked like Mexicans.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE FEBRUARY 20TH POPULAR.

IN THEIR OWN HOME TOWNS

AL JOLSON, the musical-comedy star, who hails from Washington, D. C., is one man who does a "big business" in his own home town. Most actors and actresses, for reasons that nobody ever has been able to explain, draw poor houses in the cities where they spent their youth. For instance, George M. Cohan makes no secret of the fact that he and his productions are not given wild ovations in Providence, Rhode Island, his home town. Even Maude Adams, whose home was in Salt Lake City, can not boast of big box-office receipts there. Henry Miller, who came from Toronto, Canada, is not wild about Toronto as a place in which to play. Marie Doro has her troubles with Kansas City, her home, and Rose Stahl can muster no enthusiasm when told she is booked to play her birthplace, Trenton, New Jersey.

A FIGHT TO A FINISH IN THE SIERRAS

The Benevolent Liar

Roy Norton's new novel

Complete in the POPULAR for February 20th

Ye Gods!

By H. C. Witwer

Author of "Pretty Soft," "Aw, Let 'Em Vote," Etc.

This modern Orpheus came out of the backwoods and didn't look like a man that had music in his soul. But you never can judge by appearances. His friends were ready to proclaim him well called when they peeped into his trunk

THIS friendship thing is great stuff. As the feller says, "A friend in need is a friend indeed!" But I think the guy that tore off that line had it all wrong. Accordin' to my dope, a friend in need is a good guy to duck! He's a human pest with a hard-luck story and an open palm. He can remember when you was up against it together in Succotash Crossing, Missouri, and, that bein' the case, he expects you to part with everything from half the rent money to your rubber heels, before he moves on to the next friend.

All my friends are friends in need. They all need somethin'.

But, on the other hand, take envy—the thing that busted up Adam's flat in the Garden of Eden, started the war, and built New York. It works just like that, too; it'll either put you over or bury you. Most people call it ambition, but that's the bunk! They say to themselves: "I'm sick of jugglin' a pen or a shovel for cigarette money; I'm goin' to shoot at the Big Job, and I won't cease firin' till I hit it!" The reason they feel that way is because Joe Leghorn, who went to school with them, is makin' big money and has his own silk shirt and green fedora hat.

That ain't ambition; that's envy! Ambition is when a guy wants to make good on general principles, regardless of what the other voters are doin'. Columbus was full of ambition and discovered America. The only thing a guy full of envy will discover is that work, and not wishin', put the big leaguers over.

About the worst case of envy I ever seen was shared among Ed McGuire, Lew Haskins, and Orpheus Lasky. That was somethin' extra special while it lasted—five-star stuff; know what I mean?

McGuire was a catcher. Just callin' him that is like admittin' Rockefeller is well fixed, because that don't tell it at all. I don't think there was a backstop in the league that classed with Ed McGuire when it come to cuttin' down a base runner, and there ain't many in there grabbin' fouls to-day that would cause him much worry. He could whip that pill to second like a bullet, and it had about the same effect as far as the runner was concerned. It killed his steal deader than the overcoat trade in Africa.

Discouragin' stolen bases wasn't the only trick McGuire knew, either. He had two more. One of 'em was hittin' .325 year in and year out, and the other one was performin' on the mouth organ. Naturally he was a little chesty over the way he could burn the ball to the middle corner, and I never heard him deny that he was Clean-up Charlie when it come to battin'.

But on the level that guy was simply crazy over what he could do with a mouth organ!

He freely confessed that he was the greatest performer on one of them things the world had ever seen. He claimed that he could do more with it than Paderwisky could with a piano, or Sousa could with a horn, and that both them guys was lodge-smoker entertainers alongside of him. He had one made

to order for him in St. Looey one time that set him back two weeks' pay. The outside of the thing was sterling silver and the inside was full of holes, and there was a trick plate on one side with his initials on it. McGuire thought more of that than a loan shark does of interest, and all the time he wasn't playin' ball he was playin' *it*.

Then along come Lew Haskins.

Haskins was a pitcher by trade and a cousin of McGuire's by birth. He had a fast inshoot, a three-year contract with the club, and—a mouth organ! He'd done time at college and learned to say, "Here's to dear old Yale, drink hearty!" or somethin' that sounded like that, and he pulled it for a gag line every time he got a chance, which was whenever somebody would buy.

The nearest McGuire had ever been to college was the day we played Harvard.

Haskins didn't look much like his cousin, and I don't blame him, because McGuire would never have broke up no homes with his face. But nature had give him other accomplishments, among 'em bein' that mouth-organ thing—and that's what started the trouble.

They both joined the club about the same time, Haskins comin' direct from the dear old college and McGuire from the St. Looey Browns. About a month after McGuire was one of us he starts to slow up and slide back, and Haskins looks like a bad buy after the first few starts. Both these guys thought more about music than they did about baseball, and it was showin' out loud in their work.

Now you'd think that two fellers like that, both bein' fond of music and bein' more or less relatives, would be as friendly as lovers—but they wasn't! The cause of it all was this envy thing.

About a week after the season opened McGuire is in the clubhouse one afternoon with half a dozen of the bunch gathered around him listenin' to him force "The Poet and Peasant" out of that mouth organ, when in walks Haskins. He stands lookin' over at where all that music is comin' from, and then he frowns and butts into the circle.

"Say!" he calls to McGuire, interruptin' the musicale. "D'ye wanna make some soft money?"

McGuire stops playin' and glares up at him.

"What d'ye mane?" he growls, sore because he had to knock off in the middle of the overture.

"Well," answers Haskins, sneerin' back at him, "if you'll lay off that noise till I get my clothes changed, I'll slip you a buck!"

At that there was a silence in the room that would make a graveyard seem like a boiler factory. The only guy that breathed was Red Sisson, and he had asthma. Everybody else held their breath, waitin' for the massacre. We all knew what McGuire thought of himself as a musician and how touchy he was about it. Why, he knocked big Mason cold one afternoon because Mason claimed he had two notes wrong in "The Midnight Fire Alarm."

McGuire lays down the mouth organ and looks up at Haskins with manslaughter in his eye. Them with weak hearts started for the air.

"And—eh—and what noise are yez sp'akin' about?" he grunts, with a hard smile on his face.

"That racket you're forcin' from that thing you got in your mouth," says Haskins, still sneerin'.

McGuire takes out a handkerchief and carefully wipes off the mouth organ, polishin' it up and finally puttin' it away in the velvet case he always carried it in. The bunch watches every move he makes like the crowd watches a guy in a store window demonstratin' a trick razor or somethin'. It looked like an excitin' time was about to be had by all. He gets up off the bench and removes his sweater so's it won't interfere with his arms.

"That noise," he says to Haskins, "that noise, as you're pl'ased to call it, happens to be music!"

"Stop it!" grins Haskins. "Don't make me laugh! Music, eh? Where do you get that stuff? It give me a headache so far and——"

"Why don't yez take somethin' for the headache?" butts in McGuire, his voice tremblin' with rage.

"What'll you gimme?" comes back Haskins, winkin' at us. "Music?" he goes on. "Why, if Orpheus ever heard that, he'd turn over in his grave!"

"And who is this Orpheus, might I ask?" snarls McGuire.

"Why, you poor bonehead!" chuckles Haskins. "D'ye mean to say you call yourself a musician and you never heard of Orpheus—the world's greatest musician?"

"I ain't been to a vaudeville show in a year," says McGuire, "and simply because I never seen this feller's act don't prove I'm stupid. Did you ever see him?"

"It's a good thing you don't have to have brains," sneers Haskins. "If you did, you'd starve to death! Orpheus was a god, you big simp!"

"What d'ye mean *a* god?" pipes McGuire. "For the love av Hivin, are yez a haythin, too, along wid bein' English? Sure ivery good Christian knows there's only wan God, and 'twas bad luck for the noble McGuires whin you come in the family."

"It was the best thing ever happened to 'em!" yells Haskins. "I'm the only one connected with you that don't eat with a knife! I been to college, you big ham, and I got an education. I ——"

"And what the divil do I care where ye been?" roars McGuire, his face gettin' red. "What if ye have been to college? There's manny a thing yez don't know for all that! I'd rather be able to play the mouth organ, which I do to perfection, than not be able to do nothin' but give bases on balls!"

"Yeh?" yells back Haskins. "Well, any simp can play one of them things; they ain't no trick to that. I got somethin' that will take care of me when I get through with baseball."

"What is it?" sneers McGuire. "Has your people got money?"

"No," says Haskins, "but *I* can take one of them mouth organs and play real music out of it. When I get through with the game I'm goin' on the stage."

"Well," answers McGuire, "if yez ain't no better as an actor than yez are as a ball player, yez won't cause the movies no worry."

"I wish you was Jess Willard!" says Haskins, movin' nearer.

"What d'ye mane?" asks McGuire.

"Because if you was," Haskins tells him, "I'd be champion of the world!"

With that he drops McGuire with a left hook to the jaw.

When I tell you that McGuire's first name was Patrick Francis you may get an idea of what come after that, beginnin' the minute he got on his feet. They went at each other like a couple of peeved wild cats, and for the next five minutes it was anybody's fight, first one staggerin' back and then the other. Finally I seen an openin', so I jump in and pried them apart.

"This little mêlée will cost you ten bucks apiece!" I tells 'em. "And the next time this happens it'll be fifty!"

"Sure, I'd give fifty dollars wid great delight for tin minutes alone wid that limb of the Old Boy!" yells McGuire. "The only Englishman we got in the family and a haythen at that!" He shakes his fist at Haskins. "Git out of me sight," he roars, "while I control meself! I kin lick you and yer god Orpheus in the wan room!"

"I'd rather be English than stupid!" shrieks Haskins. "I didn't think there was anybody so thick back of the ears that they never heard of Orpheus, the god of music. You must have been raised in a stable!"

This time it took the entire infield to separate 'em, and when we finally dragged 'em apart I was good and sore. I had stopped a stray right swing with my ear, and an odd uppercut caught me on the chin. I fined 'em fifty each, like I promised.

"Well," says McGuire, glarin' at Haskins with his one good eye, "'tis small pleasure to me to lose that fifty, but thin av course I kin pick that up in a week playin' on me mouth organ."

Haskins pushes away the two guys that's holdin' him.

"If you'd have picked up that foul of Baker's yesterday," he yelps at McGuire, "I'd have shut out the Yanks! I can pick up fifty in a *night,* playin' 'Silver Threads Among the Gold' at the Elks' smoker."

"Sure!" snorts McGuire. "Fifty cints!"

I hope I get beaned by Johnson if they didn't go at it again!

"Well, that's the way it went for the rest of the season. Every time them two guys met they went to the mat over this here Orpheus person which Haskins claimed was a god. Then they got to scrappin' over another one of them things called Jupiter, which Haskins dragged out as another god whose special stunt was causin' double-headers by makin' it rain. There was also Mars; a guy called Bacchus, who featured sloe-gin rickeys; Morpheus, Vulcan, and a lot more of them birds, all of which Haskins claimed was gods, and McGuire figured it was his duty to the family to show his heathen cousin where he was wrong. He'd start in playin' the mouth organ, and the bunch would crowd around him, applaudin' and so forth, and then Haskins would blow in and open up with *his* mouth organ. The gang would drift over to hear his stuff, and in five minutes him and McGuire would be tryin' to tear each other apart.

By the time we reached St. Looey on the last trip West, these guys were ready and willin' to murder each other. McGuire mislaid his pet mouth organ, and he swore Haskins stole it. They went four rounds to a draw in the lobby of the Planter's Hotel, and I suspended 'em both for a week. They killed time by battlin' every day they was out of the game over the subject of gods and mouth organs.

When we got to Chicago, Dave Furness sends for his wife to make the rest of the trip back East with him, and she brought her sister along with her. When Dave had led 'em up and introduced 'em to me I thought he had married the wrong one. Dave's wife was pretty, a good talker, and all that, but she had a married look—know what I mean? Her sister, not havin' no grocery bills and baby's cold to worry about, looked like a million dollars to me. She had speed, control, and curves, and when she was all set for the street she sized up like a musical-comedy press agent's dream.

Her name was Euterpe Ross.

Most of the gang is sprawled out in the hotel lobby when Dave blows in with Euterpe on his arm. McGuire is playin' "A Little Bit of Heaven," and it sounded like a whole lot of the place adjoinin'. He's got the outfield and a couple of drummers for an audience, and he's goin' big. Haskins is three feet away, tryin' to drown him out with "The Dance of the Flowers," with some bell hops and the day clerk eggin' him on. It sounded like a field day in an insane asylum, and I was tickled to death when they both flashed Euterpe at the same time and ceased firin'. Dave calls 'em over.

"Mac," he says to McGuire, "this is my sister-in-law. She's heard a lot about your music, and, bein' strong for the stuff herself, she's anxious to meet you."

I seen friend Euterpe give Dave a nasty look at that, but McGuire butts right in with a pleased grin.

"Sure, indade I'm delighted to mate you," he says. "You just got here in time!" He wipes off the mouth organ with his sleeve. "I been thryin' out 'The Burnin' of Rome' all mornin', and I got it where I want it now. Listen to this and let me know your opinion of it."

He starts right off, blowin' through them little holes.

Haskins grabs his arm and bows to Euterpe.

"Lay off, stupid!" he snarls in McGuire's ear. Then he turns to the dame. "Euterpe?" he smiles. "So you were named after the goddess of music, eh? Well, I hope you won't form your impression of ball players from this roughneck here. He happens to be a cousin of mine, but the family ain't doin' no braggin' about it. Now, speakin' of music"—he clears his throat

and drags out his mouth organ—"speakin' of music," he goes on, "if you'll step into the rest room for a moment, I'll be glad to render 'The Curse of An Aching Heart' for you. I got somethin' of a reputation on that number."

Euterpe gives them both the once over, chokes off a laugh, and throttles it down to a smile.

"Thanks," she giggles, "but I just had my shoes shined! Some other time when I have no letters to write and I'm all through with my knitting, I'll be delighted to take advantage of your invitation."

With that she blows for the elevator.

That afternoon she come out to the game, and Haskins was in the box for us against the White Sox. He gets a close-up of Euterpe, and he never was better, lettin' 'em down with two hits. As far as the Sox was concerned, second base could have been in the Federal League, because none of 'em saw it all afternoon. McGuire was on the bench all day, as sore as a split finger because he never got no chance to show Euterpe a trick. When she comes down after the fracas and shakes Haskins by the hand McGuire foams at the mouth and had to be led away.

He got his chance the followin' day, and he come through like a four-alarm fire. He nailed three guys goin' to second, got two singles—and a triple in the ninth with the bases full. When Haskins come lookin' for the fair Euterpe that night she was out on the veranda, listenin' to McGuire play "Hearts and Flowers" on the mouth organ.

Well, it looked like Dave's sister was gonna marry a ball player, all right, because one or the other of them guys was always with her, and if she wasn't lurin' 'em on, it's a cinch she wasn't complainin' to the police. She treated 'em both alike as far as the naked eye could see, and if they hated each other before, you should have seen them now! They battled on a regular schedule of one hundred and fifty-two fights, with double-headers on Sundays. Half the scrappin' they did from Chicago to Boston would have freed Ireland, stopped the Allies, or trimmed Mexico.

We finally get back to the Big Town, and I starts callin' in all the bushers I had a rubber band on so's we could make some kind of a showin' before they stopped baseball for the season. I had six good men on the hospital list, and when the owner looked over the gang of cripples I brought back he asked me had I broke a jump by playin' the German army an exhibition game somewheres. We looked like we was fresh from the trenches, and they had been usin' them Zeppelins again. McGuire and Haskins was about as much good to me as deck hands would be on a submarine. McGuire couldn't hit nothin' out of the infield, and all Haskins had left was a wind-up and a contract. They'd laid off playin' baseball long ago, and both of them was devotin' their time to playin' the mouth organ for this dame Euterpe.

One of the guys I called in was Orpheus Lasky.

He was a pitcher. He come from the backwoods, somewheres in Maine, and he was as long as the flagpole and as thin as a dime. To say he was stupid would be givin' him a boost; he was embalmed from the neck up. He thought twice two was eleven, and that grammar was played with eight on a side, and when feedin' time come around he featured a flat piece of bread and a knife. He figured the fork was simply laid at his plate to ball him up. The best tip-off on him come when Gibson asked him what he thought about the war. "What war?" he says, lookin' up like somethin' had been held out on him. Yes, I guess Lasky was the original Samuel H. Stupid, but

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Oh, boy, how that bird could pitch! He had Cobb and Speaker walkin' the floor at nights.

When McGuire heard Lasky's first name he drags him in before Haskins and laughs in his face.

"There's yer Orpheus," he says, "and a fine-lookin' god this bird is!"

"That ain't no god!" comes back Haskins, after carefully examinin'

Lasky, "and I think his first name is phony!"

Lasky looks from one to the other, kinda puzzled, but he don't let a peep out of him; he just blows out of the clubhouse. That night at the hotel he disappeared after supper, and finally I dug him up on the veranda. I asked him why he didn't mix around with the boys, and he grinned and said he was sick in his stomach.

"What have you been eatin'?" I asks him.

"It ain't that," he tells me, with a funny, sad little smile. "It's them two mouth-organ pests I got to contend with. If they pulled that stuff they call music up where I come from, they'd be put in the stocks for life. They make me sick argyin' about which one is the best player; you can tell 'em I says both of 'em are rotten!"

I told him that the best thing for him to do would be to tell 'em that himself, and they would probably throw away their mouth organs. Then I beat it, so's I wouldn't have to appear at the inquest.

After the game the next day, McGuire is sittin' by his locker, tearin' off one of his pet tunes with the usual admirin' gang around him when Lasky deliberately starts to whistle. McGuire stops right away and glares at him.

"Hey!" he yells, "If yez have no manners, thin I'll knock some into ye! Outside wid yer whistlin'!"

Lasky never bats an eye, but tunes up with a couple of notes and calls over his shoulder:

"If I wanna whistle, they ain't nobody can stop me! Especially an Irish mouth-organ player!"

McGuire lays down the instrument of torture, springs from his seat, and grabs Lasky by the shoulder.

" 'Tis not in me heart to do murder!" he says. "Nor do I want to ruin yer promisin' young career. But if as much as another note comes out of ye whilst I'm renderin' 'The Shannon River,' I'll knock the whistle out of yer system!"

"You ain't goin' to knock nothin'," comes back Lasky, as cool as a January mornin', "and I can play 'The Shannon River' better than you—to say nothin' of 'The Rosary' and 'Träumerei!' "

"Be the shade of St. Patrick!" yells McGuire, passin' over the mouth organ. "Let's hear ye now, and by Hivin if ye don't make good, I'll strangle ye!"

Lasky takes a look at the thing and then flicks it on the floor with a sarcastic smile on his face. McGuire chokes, everybody gasps, and one guy with a weak heart fainted.

"What's that—a butter mold?" sneers Lasky, lookin' McGuire right in the eye. "Anybody can play one of them things. I got a ten-year-old brother that could give you a three-tune start and beat you from here to Jersey City, usin' only one lung! But you got to be there to do *my* act! Look here!" He flings open the door of his locker, stoops down, and drags out one of them flat steamer trunks from the bottom. He opens the thing, and everybody eases over for an eyeful. If Lasky figured on creatin' a sensation when he opened that trunk, he cashed the bet. On the level, I never seen so many musical instruments in my life. Everything known to man or beast for the purpose of makin' melody was packed in the bottom. He drags out offhand a violin, a cornet, a banjo, a flute, a jew's-harp, a trombone, and a thing he claims is a ukelele and very rare. "Now," he says to McGuire, "where do you get off alongside of that layout, eh?"

McGuire's eyes are an inch from his head, and his mouth is as open as the Atlantic Ocean.

"Do yez mane to tell me ye play *all* av thim!" he whispers.

Lasky sneers. "I got 'em eatin' out of my hand!" he says. "Not only that, I can tickle the ivories and sing!"

"Tickle the ivories?" repeats McGuire, still groggy. "And what kind of a divilish trick is that, may I ask?"

"Play the piano, stupid!" Lasky tells him.

McGuire stares at him for a minute, and then suddenly he claps his hands together.

"By Hivin," he whispers, "ye *are* Orpheus at that. Come now, ain't ye?"

Lasky frowns.

"That's what I was christened," he says, blushin', "but I had the name changed to Oliver."

Just then Haskins pushes in through the door, and McGuire grabs Lasky's arm.

"Whist now!" he hisses in his ear. "Wait till this feller comes over and you'll see some fun!" He turns to Haskins. "Be some miracle of Hivin," he says, "ye're right fer wance in yer life! This feller is Orpheus himself, the bird that invented music!"

Haskins looks down at the trunkful of harmony on the floor and laughs.

"Which one of them do you play?" he asks Lasky.

"All of 'em!" snaps Orpheus.

Haskins grins some more.

"Stop it!" he says. "Orpheus himself couldn't do that!"

"Yeh?" sneers Lasky. "Well, I'm Orpheus! Where did you guys find out my name?"

"It's in all the papers," answers Haskins. "Is that all you do—just play them eight or nine small, easy instruments there?"

"No!" pipes Lasky. "I can wiggle my ears, tell riddles, and pitch. What's your trick?"

"Well," says Haskins, "I'm on the pay roll as a pitcher, but aside from that"—he draws his mouth organ from his pocket—"aside from that I can play this like it's never been played before!"

"Let's see it," snorts Lasky. He looks it over and laughs. "I broke in on this thing!" he sneers, reachin' down in the bottom of the trunk. "Here's a handful of 'em. I play 'em in between when I ain't got nothin' particular to do."

McGuire and Haskins looks at each other and gasps.

"I don't believe he can play 'em all at that!" whispers Haskins.

"What'll you bet?" snaps out Lasky, diggin' a hand in his pocket and bringin' out a fistful of bills.

Them two cousins looks at each other again, McGuire coughs, and Haskins blows his nose. Then they just give Orpheus this here West Point silence and took the air.

Haskins went in to pitch against the Cubs that afternoon, and he hurled air-tight ball for six innin's. Then he blowed up with a loud report, and when they had got sick of runnin' around the bases they had grabbed off four runs from his offerin's. I yanked him out and sent in Lasky. This music master shuts 'em out for the next three innin's, triples with the bases full, winnin' the game, and attracted the attention of Euterpe.

After the fracas Haskins hunts me out in the hotel and drags me to his room. He says somethin' has got to be done at our earliest convenience or Lasky will walk away with the fair Euterpe.

"He's makin' a hit now," he tells me, "with that trick front name of his. He claims he was christened Orpheus, and the girl thinks that's great stuff because her name is Euterpe, and I understand she's wild over music. Now if she ever finds out he can play all them instruments he carries around, where will we get off?"

"What d'ye mean *we?*" I asks him.

"Me and McGuire!" he answers. "I don't mind havin' *him* for a rival because it's in the family, and you know yourself I got it on him eighty-five ways as a musician. But this outside competition has got to be discouraged."

"Well," I says, "if I was you, I'd make McGuire kiss and make up so's you can get together and give Lasky the works."

"I guess you're right at that!" he tells me, after thinkin' it over for a minute. "I'll try it."

They must have got together that night, because I seen them at the same table, and when McGuire asked Haskins would he kindly pass the salt he passed it instead of invitin' his relative to go South like he always used to. That night, as they say in the movies, I was passin' McGuire's room when I heard him and Haskins talkin'. Stop-

pin' for an earful like anybody would, I notice Lasky's voice, too.

"——and whatever you do," Haskins is sayin, 'low and very confidential, "whatever you do, don't let Euterpe find out your weakness for music! If there's anything that girl hates, it's a musician! I understand her grandfather was killed by the slide of a trombone fallin' back on his forehead, and every time she hears a tune it reminds her of the thing. The guy that met that unseemly death was her favorite grandfather, and you can figure how the poor girl feels. What you want to do is make out you hate music, too, see? That will make you solid with her. She's off us, simply because we're musicians."

"Did *she* say you was musicians?" asks Lasky.

"She called us that," answers Haskins. "Y'know she uses the word like it was a cuss word. It's her favorite way of insultin' somebody she don't like. See—'G'wan, you old musician!' —get it?"

"Yeh," says Lasky after a minute. "I got you. Thanks for tippin' me off."

"That's all right," pipes Haskins. "I'd do anything for a friend."

"Then git rid of that mouth organ," comes back Lasky, startin' for the door, "and you'll make yourself solid with me."

I beat it then because he had his hand on the knob. If he had seen me there, he might have thought I was ignorant enough to listen.

The next day Lasky watches the game from a box that was empty except for Euterpe Ross. I don't believe they knew whether we was playin' baseball or old maid, because they was too busy with each other. Lasky must have had everything on his monologue, for Euterpe was listenin' like he was tellin' her how to make gold out of mud. Haskins and McGuire didn't mind, though, because they figured she would ask waivers on Lasky the minute he told her he hated music. Haskins said every time he thought of how easy Lasky fell for the plant he had to laugh right out loud.

"Think of the poor boob deliberately queerin' himself," he says to me, "when all the time he could win out by playin' a few of them musical instruments for her. It takes brains to figure out how to outwit a guy like that!"

I guess Lasky must have forgot to tell Euterpe what an awful thing music was, because they was in that box again the next day, and they looked like lovers to me.

That afternoon Dave Furness comes up to my room and shuts the door. He had one of them deep-stuff airs about him, like what he was goin' to tell me would stagger Europe once it got out.

"Mac," he says in a hoarse voice, "somethin' has got to be done at once or the worst will happen!"

"Well," I tells him, "we only got two more games to play and the season will be over. Even if we lose 'em both we can't drop no farther down than we are now, unless they let another club in the league."

He snaps his fingers like he can't be bothered with trifles.

"What do I care where we finish?" he snorts. "Why shouldn't we be last with a lot of simps on the club that would rather have music than a pennant? On the last trip West we lost everything but the franchise on account of them rats. What I'm talkin' about now is that stupid boob Lasky and my sister-in-law. She seems to have fell for him, and the wife is crazy. What d'ye know about him—anything?"

"Not a thing!" I says. "For all I know he may be the guy that blowed up the *Maine*. I don't know whether he tends bar or cracks safes in the wintertime when he ain't playin' ball. He can play about sixteen musical instruments, though; I know that."

"He can which?" shouts Dave, jumpin' up.

"He's one of them musicians," I explains, "and——"

"Great!" exclaims Dave, with a broad smile on his face. "That's all I want to know. Fine business! I'm glad you told me that because it clears the whole thing up. As soon as Euterpe finds

out that this hick is strong for music in any shape or form—good night!"

"Why, I thought she was crazy for the thing," I says.

"No," he tells me, "she hates it. You see, she was named after Euterpe, which means the goddess of music, and ever since she was seven years old people have taken it for granted that she was a bear on music of all kinds. Everywhere she goes they pull that music thing on her until it's got on her nerves. She's heard it so often that she can't pass a piano without gettin' faint, and she wouldn't marry a guy that had anything to do with music for a million bucks, United States money. Now if you'll tell Lasky to tell her what he can do with a sheet of music, and get him to play up strong all the instruments he performs on, that's one romance that will cease right then and there."

"Well, Dave," I says, "I'll do it, but it's goin' to be tough goin', believe me! Them two boobs, McGuire and Haskins, have told Lasky to swear he hated music with all his heart and soul and that he don't know a violin from a gin rickey. However, I'll do what I can."

I sent for Lasky that night in the hotel.

"Lasky," I tells him, "Haskins and McGuire framed you up when they told you to make out you hated music. The idea was to get you in Dutch with Euterpe. That stuff about her not likin' the thing was all bunk, because, to get right down to it, she's nutty over it, and has been since birth. Why, take her name, for instance. D'ye know what it means?"

"No," says Lasky, kinda puzzled. "What does her name mean?"

"The goddess of music," I tells him. "That's the tip-off, ain't it?"

Instead of answerin' me, he laughs and slaps his hand on his knee.

"And you say she *likes* music?" he asks me after a minute.

"Likes it?" I answers. "She's nutty over it! You take all them trick instruments of yours around to her and play 'em just once—see?—and the girl's yours."

Lasky walks over and looks out the window. The smile has gone away from his face, and he looks as gloomy as Paterson at night. He don't say a word for about three minutes, and then he sighs and turns around.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he says, "because it's broke my heart. I wish fate had never throwed you and me together so's you could tell me that girl likes music. *I hate it!* And as for playin' one of them instruments—say, I couldn't play a record on a phonograph!"

On the level, I nearly went out cold!

"What!" I yells, when my voice come back. "You ain't no musician?"

"If I'm a musician," he says in a sad voice, "Sousa is a shippin' clerk. I don't know a banjo from a jew's-harp, and I never could stand parades on account of the bands. My people must have christened me for spite, because they stuck one over on me when they called me Orpheus. I think that bird went around claimin' he was the god of music, and he must have got away with it, for ever since I been a kid as soon as people heard my name they'd say, 'Orpheus, eh? Why, you must be a great musician, ain't you?' And that's what I've had to put up with all my life until I'm so sick of music that lookin' at a canary makes me sick for a week."

"But that layout you carry with you!" I gasps. "All them horns and things! What about that?"

He picks up his hat and grins.

"I went out and bought that mess," he explains, "to make Haskins and McGuire lay off the music thing. They had me nutty with that mouth-organ stuff, and I couldn't stand it no longer; I'm only a human bein'. I thought if they seen all them things, they'd figure they didn't class with me when it come to music and quit—and they did! If they ever asked me to play any of 'em, I'd have been through."

He walks over to the door, and I sat lookin' after him and thinkin' of the day in the clubhouse when he offered to bet Haskins he could play all them things—and bluffed both them

big hicks out of bettin'. Y'know I was wishin' I was Euterpe's father. I'd have *made* her marry that guy!

"Well," I says, "what are you goin' to do now?"

"I'm goin' right around to Euterpe," he tells me, with another sigh, "and give her the low-down on the way I lied to them guys. I'll tell her I hate music and the reason I don't like it. If she wants to quit, all right. I don't want to stake myself to no musical wife, anyhow. I'm figurin' on the long chance that when she hears why I don't care for the thing she'll forgive me."

"Long chance, eh?" I laughs. "I wish I had the same chance of gettin' in the world's series."

He looked at me kinda puzzled, but went out without sayin' any more.

I didn't see him no more until six o'clock the next mornin', and he blows into my room all out of breath and excited.

"Well," he says, sittin' down on the bed, "I did it! It's all over now!"

"She throwed you down, eh?" I says, feelin' sorry for the big hick. "Well, don't take it too hard, and keep away from the redeye. There's lots——"

"Stop ravin'," he butts in, grinnin', "and take that picture of Venus at the Well off the wall. I'm a married man!"

I sat up in bed so quick I like to broke my back.

"What?" I yells. "You don't mean to say that you and Euterpe——"

"Why not?" he interrupts. "This is a free country, ain't it? I been married ever since four o'clock this mornin'. I went around and told Euterpe the reason I didn't like music was because my name was Orpheus, and I wound up by sayin' I'd be willin' to take on the piano or somethin' if it would make a hit with her. With that she falls in my arms, and when we got to where we could talk, she claims Venus, which is one of them she-gods, had throwed us together, and I says that's right and as long as we got all them gods in there tryin' for us, and, bein' a couple of gods ourselves, we ought to git married."

"And what did she say to that?" I says, still kinda weak.

"She says, 'Let's go!'" he answers. "And we did. We been a young married couple for two hours. A funny thing about it was the fact that we was made one, as they say, by a guy called Alderman Hymen Lasinski—and the wife says that guy is a god, too!"

ASKING FOR THE REAL NEWS

REPRESENTATIVE HEFLIN, of Alabama, known among his friends in Congress as "Handsome Heflin," enjoys also the reputation of telling, with unequaled humor, good stories about the negro race. There are some parts of the South, Heflin says, where all the "best people" are Democrats, just as there are sections in the North where all the "best" are Republicans.

In one of the Southern towns, according to Heflin, the bulletin boards of a newspaper flashed the news of what was going on in Chicago when the Republican and Bull Moose conventions were held, last summer. In the crowd that stood in the street, awaiting the messages, was an old colored man, who could not read, and was there merely because everybody else was there. He took no particular interest in politics. In fact, he had no vote.

Suddenly somebody near the old darky exclaimed:

"There you are! The Republicans have nominated Hughes. And the Bull Moosers have nominated Teddy—but he's going back on 'em!"

"Humph!" said the old colored man. "Now, who is de white folks goin' to nom'nate?"

Dory Mates

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Landlubber's Luck," "Big Timber," Etc.

The ship chandler tells a story of two hard-and-fast friends afloat and ashore who ended the friendship tragically while dory mates in the halibut fishing grounds of the North Pacific. The cause—the old one that a shrewd Frenchman declared lies back of most mysteries

ONE sometimes comes across the queerest things in the most casual way. This incident, unimportant and commonplace in itself, dovetails with another and yet another; this man or that woman flits across one's orbit and is gone again; and presently, out of the natural and inevitable muddle of unrelated action and word, there will take form a picture the greatest romancer—unaided by the curiously devious angles of actuality—could never evoke full blown from his imagination. And sometimes these formless events climax swiftly and suddenly in tragic form, sometimes in grotesque and sardonic humor.

Personally I've never been a seeker after excitement, a hungerer after adventure. I'm a plain citizen. My business is prosaic enough. I have a very good salaried position with a firm of ship chandlers. This calling brings me in daily contact with the water front and all its activities. I have a considerable acquaintance among seafaring men, which I am at some pains to cultivate, firstly because I've found them good fellows, and secondly for business reasons. I attend to my business diligently because I fully expect in time to become a member of the firm. I find none of my affairs irksome. But, like many another man who works hard, for all my ambition to get on I get stale now and then and long for a touch of something different.

Which, so far as I can make out, is the chief and only reason why I elected to spend my vacation last summer making a deep-water trip on the halibut schooner *Susan Jones.* In common with plenty of confirmed landsmen I own a liking for the sea. I don't attempt to analyze that feeling. I have it, and there you are. I knew the skipper of the *Susan Jones,* a genial Nova Scotian named Ben Robertson. He asked me out for a trip with him—largely, I suspected, by way of a joke, for the halibut grounds of the north Pacific is no place for any but men with tried sea legs. I turned the joke on him by enthusiastically accepting his offer.

The *Susan Jones* was an able ninety-footer, built and rigged in the beginning as a Gloucester fisherman. You may judge her seaworthiness by the fact that she was built on the New England coast and came around the Horn under canvas. But the straight-sailing schooner type of the Grand Banks is not well adapted to Pacific-coast conditions. Therefore the *Susan Jones* lost the upper part of her lofty spars, her sail area was reduced to sixty per cent, and with a hundred-horse-power, heavy-duty gas engine installed after she became an auxiliary halibuter—like scores of other vessels following the same business, except for the graceful sweeping sheer line that marked her origin and type.

The *Sweet Susie* she was called along the water front, a name bestowed in praise of her sailing qualities by the crew that brought her round the Horn, continued now in a robust spirit of irony. If the point of this last be not clear, go down to the Vancouver docks

some day in the hot summer and let your olfactory sense gain full appreciation of what smells arise from fish hold and bilge of a halibut schooner long in the trade. It is a fine, sturdy smell, not of filth, but reminiscent of fish and kelp and tarred cordage and odors from the engine room and cook's galley—nevertheless a smell. One grows accustomed to it.

She was a ten-dory boat the trip I sailed in her. That is to say, she fished that many dories with hand-line gear. This meant a crew of twenty fishermen, besides a mate, a cook, two engineers, and a watchman. Including myself, we numbered quite a crowd. I was a superfluous unit, signed on as deck hand to comply with the shipping regulations.

We cleared on a Tuesday afternoon. For a couple of hours before the mooring lines were cast off I shifted about from deck to fo'c's'le head and along the rail, vastly interested in the final rush of preparations for the outward voyage. There arrived a lull in the proceedings, and the mate gravitated in my general direction and sat down on a coil of line.

"We'll be off pretty soon, eh?" I ventured.

" 'Bout an hour, anyhow," he nodded. "I guess we could slip out any time now, only we're waiting on a couple uh fishermen."

"Celebrating?" I inquired, bearing in mind the shore diversions of these hardy sons of the sea.

"Uh-uh," he grunted. "Neither of 'em fights booze. They're rushin' a girl, I hear. Both of 'em after the same skirt."

His tone bespoke a mild disapproval of men who gave way to such a weakness. He was a married man, and the father of four. Perhaps that was why he saw little merit in passionate rivalry—at least such as even temporarily delayed the sailing of a vessel.

He sauntered off presently, his tobacco-stained teeth clamped firmly on the butt of a cigar from my store. The skipper came fuming aft in the course of twenty minutes. He, too, had the absent hands on his mind to such an extent that he was visibly annoyed. He could not well leave without his full complement, and able dorymen are not to be picked up on short notice. They are the aristocrats of deep-sea fishing, resourceful, independent customers who disdain common wages, receiving a share in the catch instead. Neither could Robinson equably face the necessity of waiting on the next tide. Seymour Narrows is held in profound respect among coastwise mariners. The B. C. Coast Pilot says that a vessel capable of seventeen knots can buck the Narrows tide. But the seventeen-knot steamers are chary of trying it, and for a ten-knot craft like the *Susan Jones* it was out of the question, unless the skipper wanted to stick the underwriters at the risk of losing his ticket.

Before our skipper had accumulated too great a head of steam on his chest, however, the missing men arrived. With the mention of them fresh in my mind naturally they took my eye. Which they would have done in any case, because they were easily the biggest and finest-looking men in the crew. We laid against the Northwest Fisheries wharf, our decks some twenty feet below the pileheads, and the two were scarcely down the ladder before bow and stern lines were cast off and the *Susan's* propeller was thrashing astern.

The business of backing into the stream rather escaped me, as I was intent on the late comers. Aside from the agile bulk of them, the contrasting expression on their faces was sufficient to hold my attention. They lit on the deck not a dozen feet from me, and the first down turned to his mate with some remark. He was a little the taller, and though well built still lacked a good deal of the other's thickness. Moreover, his hair was of a ruddy tinge, and across his fair, slightly florid face there lay a sprinkling of freckles. His attitude was carefree and uncommonly genial, as of a man quite pleased with himself and the world in general.

But it was not wholly his attitude I marked. As I said, he turned to his companion and spoke, a sentence or two

finished off with a friendly grin. The other man's face grew, if anything, more lowering; his moody look seemed to deepen. He was a swarthy, square-jawed fellow about twenty-seven or eight, I should say. The first man spoke again, this time more earnestly, laying at the same time his hand on the other's shoulder. That individual shook it off with a quick, impatient twist of his body, muttered something which might have been an oath or a protest, and strode away to the fo'c's'le companion, down which he straightway disappeared.

The red-headed man placed his hands on his hips, and stood looking after him. Then he also gave an impatient hitch to his shoulders, and addressed a remark to no one in particular as he moved slowly over to the starboard rail. The words carried distinctly to me.

"Now, I wouldn't be sore like that if it was *me*," he said.

I had never laid eyes on either man before. Nor can I be classed as a particularly observing person. Yet there was something about this byplay which stuck in my mind. It made me take a good deal more stock in these two than I otherwise should, when I was quartered in the fo'c's'le along with them. Lest it be considered odd that the guest of the skipper should berth before the mast, I might say that a halibut schooner is manned on democratic principles. In the *Susan Jones* the fo'c's'le was the roomiest, most comfortable quarters aboard.

Taken by and large, we were not halfway to the fishing grounds before I was aware of the rock these two had split upon, and that was no more or less than the girl of whom the mate had spoken. Others of the fishing crew knew both the woman and the circumstances. Now and then one ventured a jesting remark—when neither of the two concerned was by. Apparently during this latest stay in port the matter had come to a head. To their mates it was like any other sporting contest in which the best man should naturally win. The ruddy-haired one, whose name was Dave Archibald, went about with some pleasant self-communion that brightened his eye and kept him in rare good humor. I dare say that when a man is tingling with happiness it is bound to radiate from him as warmth radiates from a glowing stove.

It was the exact opposite with MacLellan, his mate; they were dory mates, it seemed, and had been for two seasons hard-and-fast friends afloat and ashore. Not having known him before, I could not vouch for the truth of it, but the boys said Mac was a different man. I know he was very quiet, self-contained, without being gruff or moody. He kept to himself a good deal of the time, lying in his bunk poring over magazines while the *Susan Jones* walloped up the Inside Passage.

He did not come out of his shell until we had cleared Cape Spencer. Then, with the gear all ready to shoot, and the crew waiting for orders to bait up, MacLellan shook off his low spirits. If any resentment still lurked in him for Archibald's success over him in the affair of the lady, he evidently had made up his mind that it was a small thing between friends. And Archibald was patently glad of this change. It didn't need more than half an eye to see that there was a genuine comradeship between the pair—one of those masculine partnerships which sometimes endures greater stress than a more tender emotion.

Eventually we reached the grounds. At a point where the land was a faint, blurred line on the horizon, the skipper began to heave the lead. When he had gotten a depth to his liking, the *Susan Jones* was hove to, and the first dory went overside. We were favored with a calm sea—calm in the sense of it being untroubled by wind. When you get up along the Aleutians, those great waters which spread away, unbroken, to the Antipodes are seldom still. Nearly always a ground swell runs strong. With a stiff wind—well, I leave it to your imagination. A landsman is apt to lose all interest in proceedings aboard ship when a stiff breeze harries those marching swells.

The catch was good from the start—eight and ten thousand pounds a day, sometimes more. It seemed that we had struck ground where halibut swarmed. The fishermen were happy. Big catches meant a big share check for them. They tossed in the dories all day, and dressed down their take in the evening, working sometimes sixteen hours. And they throve on it. Particularly Dave Archibald and Tom MacLellan. If big Mac had a grouch, it was buried as deep as the halibut lay.

So for a week things went swimmingly. Then a day opened with a nastier heave to the sea, a tremendous, long, slow lift to it, though scarcely a breath of air fanned us. Under the *Sweet Susan's* hatches there was already a fair trip's take, all packed and stowed in crushed ice. Our skipper cast a weather eye aloft and out over the sea, which somehow seemed to have lost its blending shades of green and blue and to have become a drab, sodden gray. Even to me it looked sinister. To a seaman it must have portended something, the vanguard of a gale. Robertson was of two minds about making a set that morning, I know. But there was still room in the fish hold, and the men were eager to make it a record trip. Weather was little to them. If they could set their gear, that was all they cared. The risk did not, I suppose, trouble them at all. They were used to that watery uneasiness. And the Pacific-coast dory, which is the big brother of the Grand Bank dory, will live through a sea that will trouble many a ship.

So the skipper yielded to the demands of the business, and the winch was manned to put the dories off. When they were all out and bobbing in the sea, a lot of yellow specks rising and falling tremendously, he mounted to a little bridge winged on to the pilot house and watched them with creases running up and down his brows. The *Susan Jones* lay to under sail, which kept her head on to the roll.

We put the dories out in a line over ground located by the lead along that favorite depth known as the "hundred-fathom edge." For the floor of the sea thereabouts is much like the mainland rising eastward—all ridges and valleys, peaks and basins, rock and coral-floored here, great areas of cozy mud there. There are certain depths and kinds of bottom where halibut forgather in schools. A skipper's success lies in knowing where to make his set.

My friend Robertson had the name of being uniformly successful. He had been so this trip. He was a Nova Scotian, a deep-water man from boyhood, a master of Grand Bank fishermen and north Pacific halibuters for ten years. I suppose his experience embraced all sorts of weather and many of the sea chances that fall to a seaman's lot. His nerves were commonly said to be cast iron. But it seemed to me, as we hung over the bridge rail that morning, as if he were distinctly uneasy.

"I don't like the look of this day at all, d'ye know it?" he finally confided. "The glass doesn't indicate much, either. I've just got a hunch there's something coming."

Whether this hunch was predicated upon local weather indications or simply those peculiar intuitions which seamen sometimes feel in their bones I cannot say. But I know that while we were below at noon for a snack there came through an open porthole a strong puff of cold air, and the old *Susan* listed ever so slightly with the pressure of it against her canvas, for she had fallen off, and lay now in the trough of the sea. Robertson looked out, grunted something, and left the table with his meal half finished. I followed him. On deck a brisk wind whistled among our standing rigging for a minute. It died to a calm. In a minute or so another puff struck us like a slap in the face. But more significant still was the look of the sea far over our port bow.

It appeared as a dark line, with a peculiar, hazy condition of the atmosphere hovering about it. And this phenomena—at least to me it was phenomenal—drew up at a noticeable rate.

Robertson skipped nimbly into the

pilot house and relieved the mate on watch, gave that officer a few curt orders, and jingled his engine-room signals.

The nearest dory rode the uneasy swells a few hundred yards away. That one was fast hauling his gear. His fellow farther to loo'ard had already pulled his set, for he answered the *Susan's* warning blast with an uplifted oar. The dorymen knew heavy weather when they saw it approaching as well as our skipper did.

We ran down to the first, picked up dory, men, and all by an outswinging boom, and, hoisting tackle from the winch, passed on to the next and his fellows to the lee. All the time that darkening line to the sou'west came creeping up. Puffs of cold air struck us intermittently. There was a stronger heave to the swells that reached far before the storm area, giving the schooner a quicker fore-and-aft pitch as she crossed the seas. In the trough she rolled with a sickening heel that troubled my stomach.

We had seven dories aboard and nested, their fish dumped anyhow into the pens alongside the hatch, when the wind and the wind-torn sea struck us together like a pair of battering-rams. We bore down upon the eighth, and there were still two more beyond. I stood clinging to the rail, the wind screeching in my ears, marveling at the hardihood and persistence of these fishermen. Their dory was rearing and plunging like a colt on the rope, sharp, steep combers heaving up and breaking now. Yet these two methodically hauled on the last skate of gear, hand over hand, pausing to gaff a halibut even as Robertson swore an oath through the pilot-house window and bawled through a two-foot megaphone:

"Stand by, there! Cut the line!"

They obeyed, not without visible reluctance. The one who drew his knife across the ground line did so with a shrug of his thick shoulders. A fisherman hates to sacrifice his gear. But one did not need vast experience in such matters to see that a few skates of gear more or less counted for little now. So ugly ran the seas that when we drew in on the windward side of the dory she, rising on the crest of a wave, stood for a moment above the level of our decks as we sank into the trough.

It was ticklish work then. If the schooner stood too near to get her hoisting tackle fast, there was every chance of her ponderous bulk crushing the dory and men in one lurch. However, it was smartly managed, under the circumstances. The hoisting gear was made fast, and the next sea that dropped us into a hollow and lifted the dory, the winch raced and the boat came over the deck with a vicious swing that sent it, like a pendulum, far to the other side. A dozen hands caught it as it swung back, and the winchman lowered it, with a thump, on deck.

Personally, I thought it looked rather dubious for the two dories yet afloat. The wind was fairly screaming now, snatching the words from a man's lips so that when one spoke to you at a distance of three paces it was all lip play and no sound. One had to shout furiously. Along with the wind from the windward quarter rose the deep, indescribable roar of the seas, rearing, tumbling, breaking in white patches. It is a peculiar sound that, deep-toned, yet full of sibilant hissings.

I had my glasses. Planted in the lee of the pilot house, I brought them to bear on the last dory. We were fairly close on one, and I paid little heed to it, for the last of all, and the most distant, was the dory in which Dave Archibald and Tom MacLellan fished. Whether they had drawn their gear or cut it I did not know, but they were riding the seas nose on, with their oars out. I could only get occasional sight of them. Sometimes while the *Susan Jones* soared high on a surge the dory would be hidden in one of those cavernous sea valleys. And again, we ourselves in the schooner would drop down till our low decks were below the level of the racing crests. My view of them was decidedly occasional. But when I did see them they appeared to be weathering it fairly enough.

My attention was drawn to things

nearer at hand by a yell and a crash. A lurch of the schooner had yanked the dory across the rail before the winch had hoisted them high enough to clear. Something let go as the dory smashed on the bulwark. Both fishermen, their halibut, and their skates of coiled gear were spilled headlong on the deck. One suffered a badly bruised face. The dory was stove in along one side. At that, the matter might easily have been worse. They could as readily have been spilled overside. No one, even the man who was hurt, seemed to think much of it. We were all by then keyed up to quite a pitch. It was going to be a desperate job to pick up the last dory in so heavy a sea. And as Robertson turned the *Susan's* bluff bows toward Archibald's craft, I, hanging with one hand to a mizzen stay against the schooner's wallow, turned my glasses on the last of the lot.

I suppose I gasped when I got sight of her. I had a clear, long look, too, for the dory lifted and hung on the slope of the sea for fully half a minute, at such an inclination that I could see the halibut in her midship pen and the skates of gear in a heap.

There was only one man in her. Dave Archibald was the missing one. MacLellan hung on his oars, bareheaded, his black hair all tousled by the wind, his lips parted with the effort.

We were less than three hundred feet from him then. In five minutes more the *Susan Jones* was hovering alongside. A murmur ran among the men clustered in the waist of the schooner. But no one said much. There was only one possible end to Dave Archibald, and they waited till his mate was aboard to ask how it happened.

In that ugly tumble the dory was hooked up only after a lot of trouble. When she swung up and in over the rail and came to rest on the deck, MacLellan sat in his seat like a man stunned. His tanned face was the color of ashes, his big, hook-scarred hands all in a tremble.

"What come uh Dave?" a fisherman broke the momentary silence

MacLellan looked up at the man, then out at the wild run of the sea.

"I couldn't get to him," he said huskily. "He stood up just as she give a heave, an' over he went. I throwed him a oar—but he couldn't make it. He only come up once."

Robertson came down from the pilot house. MacLellan repeated his account in a dull, hopeless fashion. And that was the end of the matter. The man was badly shaken, deeply stirred by his mate's loss. And the crew, from the skipper down, were not the sort to dwell in wordy excitement upon an obvious fact. They were sorry for Dave Archibald—but he was beyond all peradventure a dead man now. That was one of the chances of their calling, to die swiftly with their sea boots on. They could well understand the feelings of his dory mate. The least they could do was to pass it over in silence, and they did.

But it cast a shadow on us all for the time being. It was more or less in every man's mind, I suppose, and could not well be got rid of, for we had a constant reminder before us in MacLellan's somber face. He seemed to take it hard. Through all the rest of the wild day, while the *Susan Jones* lurched and yawed toward Cape Spencer, he lay on his bunk, face down in his pillow. Late that night the run of the sea somewhat abated, so that it was possible for the cook to keep a pot on the galley stove, and we had hot coffee and a bit to eat.

I shall remember that fourteen hours or so a long time. We ran with the seas, quartering them slightly—but we could not always run fast enough, for all our power and a trysail for'ard to steady her. Three times in the afternoon we took boarding seas over the stern, so that water ran in a waist-deep surge over the main hatch. But the *Susan* was built for heavy weather. She was tight. She could be swept, but not filled. And, though Robertson was once of a mind to come about and lie head-on to a sea drag, he decided to carry on. And at last the screaming wind blew itself out, the sea grew less

turbulent, and we drove some time that night into the protected waters of the Inside Passage.

Robertson put into Prince Rupert to report himself by cable homeward bound with nigh a full cargo, also to report Dave Archibald's drowning. It happened that we moored at a dock where another halibut schooner had her berth. I knew the boat. Her skipper, an Americanized Finn named Kohlmann, hailed me and I went over to chat with him.

"What you doin' up here?" he demanded genially. "Takin' to catchin' halibut instead uh sellin' gear to catch 'em?"

"I'm on a vacation," I explained.

We went into his cabin, and over a glass of Scotch and a cigar Kohlmann proposed that I finish my vacation with him and see another aspect of the business—a long-liner fishing the banks.

I considered this with an inclination to accept. I had the time. The *Susan Jones* had made a speedy trip. That first experience of deep water had given me a taste for more. And while perhaps I did not put it to myself in so many words, I was no longer wholly at ease in the *Susan's* fo'c's'le. Tom MacLellan's dark, brooding face was beginning to get on my nerves, to keep in the foreground of my mind a picture of his mate, a young man and strong struggling vainly for his life in an angry sea and sinking at last to be food for sharks and dogfish on the halibut banks. Most of us like to dodge the unpleasant. I think that was chiefly why I went back to the *Susan Jones,* gathered up my kit, said good-by to Robertson, and transferred myself to the *Enchilada.*

She was a comfortably found seventy-footer. I bunked with Kohlmann in his cabin abaft the pilot house. We were to sail that night; sooner, if all her crew turned up in time. Actually about nine in the evening we cast off. An hour later I turned into my bunk, well satisfied to be there.

We were slipping through Tongass Narrows next morning when I tumbled out at Kohlmann's word that breakfast was ready. The layout of the *Enchilada* differed from the *Susan's* in that the galley and mess cabin stood aft. The men were edging into their places when the skipper and I entered. It gave me something of a surprise to find my next-hand neighbor was Tom MacLellan. And if I am any judge of a man's face, the surprise was mutual. As a matter of fact, he looked startled. But that fleeting expression was replaced by a shadow as he nodded to me.

"Hello, Mac!" I greeted. "How does it happen we both shipped on the same craft again?"

"Well," he said slowly, between sips of coffee, "I couldn't stand to stay aboard the *Susan* since—since Dave's gone. So last night, when I heard Kohlmann was short a hand, I signed on here."

I could understand the man's attitude easily enough. There was nothing he could have done, of course, to save his mate in that tremendous sea. Yet I dimly sensed among his shipmates aboard the *Susan Jones* an undercurrent of feeling like that. It might have been my imagination. I couldn't see where MacLellan could have done aught but drown himself. He had been mates with Dave Archibald a long time on the *Susan Jones.* Likely enough it would be painful for him to stay aboard her after seeing his mate drown before his eyes.

I didn't have much speech with him after that. Kohlmann and I had a comfortable cabin and the run of the pilot house, and the skipper was a sociable being as well as a great hand at cribbage. As we bore out to the grounds the fishermen put in their time overhauling the long-line gear. What I saw of MacLellan at work marked him as different, always silent and thoughtful and rather sad.

Finally we cleared Cape Spencer, and with the *Enchilada* nodding her bows rhythmically to the long Pacific swell we held west by north until we came to the halibut grounds again, and word was passed to "bait up."

Now, between the fishing operations

of the *Susan Jones* and the *Enchilada* there was a profound difference. The *Enchilada* was a long-liner. She carried dories, but they never went overside to fish. The gear was run out from the deck of the schooner herself in a long series of ground lines made fast together end to end, buoyed and anchored at stated intervals. After all these hundreds of fathoms of gear were out with time enough elapsed for halibut to take the baited hooks, the line was drawn aboard by a gurdy gear amidships, and the big fish were gaffed and heaved to the deck as soon as they broke water beside the ship.

The fishermen, as I said, never put out in dories. They do all their work on the deck of the schooner, two men with gaffs at the rail, one tending line on the roller, another at the gurdy gear, others still tending the line as it goes free, and the rest dressing and stowing down fish in the iced hold. Longlining has its drawbacks, but a long-liner can fish safely in heavier weather than a dory rig, and she can fish more gear with less men.

I am not describing for its technical interest the long-line method of fishing halibut—only to make clear what happened. It could not well have happened except on a long-liner. And it did not happen until the pulling of an overnight set on the third day the *Enchilada* shot her gear.

Kohlmann was at the wheel, where he could overlook the gurdy and the incoming line, and so work the schooner that her weight would not come on the ground line to part it. The mate was on deck to keep an eye on things there. I, being a man without a task, perched on the fo'c's'le head, an interested spectator. Our first two sets had taken good hauls of fish. This one yielded a lesser quantity. The line was coming in fairly fast, with only an odd halibut rising to the gaffs.

While the gurdy chattered and ground away, my eyes wandered off to the far horizon over a sea furrowed only by the slow and solemn parade of the ground swells. The sun struck gleams here and there. It was one of those rarely beautiful autumn days, very clear, the distant land a purple line far to the north. And I was beginning to indulge in some rather sentimental reflections upon the sea's charm when a cry from a man at the rail startled me. His gaff clattered to the deck, and he threw both hands aloft.

"For the love uh God!" he shouted. "There's a dead man on the hook! Stop her! Stop her!"

This last to him that tended the gurdy gear.

Kohlmann leaned his short, square body far out the open pilot-house window.

"What's that?" he called sharply.

"The line's brought up a dead man," the fisherman replied. "Snagged him somewhere below, I guess. Ugh! It gives me the creeps."

It may, as he said, have given him the creeps, but he recovered himself quickly enough, regained hold of his long-handled gaff, and, like his mate and others who crowded up, leaned over the rail, staring curiously at that which floated below. I hopped down from the fo'c's'le head to see for myself. The mate, too, came, and the men made way for us. The body was face down, the hook on the end of a gangen snarled in his clothes. In heavy seaman's jacket it was, and hip boots, and the immersed head showed a ruddy gleam.

Before I saw the white, set face I knew it to be Dave Archibald, and I looked about for his mate.

MacLellan had been tending line on the farther side, coiling it into skates and stowing it on the quarter. He stood now looking around the corner of the pilot house, the line limp in his hand, a querulous, uncertain look on his face.

The skipper joined us for a look overside.

"Some poor devil out of luck," said he. "Not long since, by the looks, either. Heave him up, lads, and we'll give him a seaman's burial."

The gaff men hesitated a second, then snagged their gaff points in the dead man's clothing, and with a vast heave

together the body came up and in over the rail and landed with a horrid flop on decks all foul with fish scales and slime.

A murmur rang among us, and my breath came quick. It was Dave Archibald sure enough. But I had been sure of that as soon as I saw his wet hair gleam red in the sun. What I had not been prepared for was what I now saw —through the ruddy mat of his hair the ruddier line of a gash that laid his skull open. And about his neck, fast by a bit of heavy cordage, dangled a fourteen-pound sounding lead.

I swung hotly about. MacLellan had taken a step or two forward. His gaze was fixed with fearful concentration on his murdered mate. And while my tongue was framing words to denounce him he began to back away slowly the first step or two. Then he spun about with a strangled, animallike cry bursting from his lips, gained the rail with a stride and a leap, poised there a moment, and plunged headfirst to the sea.

We rushed to the rail. The *Enchilada* had no way on. She lay cradled in the slow, smooth life of the swells. He went down beside her. The mate heaved over a life buoy, barked an order for a dory to be launched.

But it was fruitless effort. All that any of us could see at first was tiny ripples spreading away from a small eddy and a few bubbles rising. Then a fisherman pointed mutely, and, looking down into the clear sea green, I saw MacLellan swimming with spasmodic strokes, head lowered, driving himself down, down into the depths, as if he sought refuge there among the sharks and dogfish to which he had treacherously consigned his mate.

While we watched, that blur in the green faded altogether, and the next swell ran smooth and unbroken over the place where he went down.

HIS PROPER DESTINATION

IGNATIUS JOHN COSTIGAN, a Washington lawyer of great eminence, is a fanatic on the subject of American preparedness. When President Wilson announced that he would march at the head of the Preparedness Parade in the National Capital on Flag Day, Costigan's enthusiasm knew no bounds. His eloquence and energy resulted in the lining up of one hundred lawyers to march as a legal unit in the big parade.

On the night before the patriotic event, Costigan labored so earnestly and so late on the details of his project that he overslept next morning. By eliminating his morning shave, he reached the starting point in time to head his gathering of brother lawyers, and to hold high in the air a canvas stretcher on which was boldly inscribed this device:

"We are going to Plattsburg!"

Ignatius John Costigan was proud of this device, proud of his imposing body of lawyers, and proud of himself as the instigator of the legal demonstration. The one jarring note in his ecstasy was an acute consciousness of the unshaved growth of heavy black beard on his glowing features.

As his marchers turned at Fifteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue to pass before the president's reviewing stand, a small colored boy divided his attention between Costigan and the bold declaration he was uplifting into the sunshine, and then called out in shrill, carrying tones:

"Say, mister, you don't want to go to Plattsburg! You want to go to a barber!"

The Avenger of the Blood

By Henry C. Rowland

Author of "Dicky," "The Central-Office Man," Etc.

Rowland describes this as "a tale of life in the Pacific when much lawlessness obtained; when the unregenerate white element could do pretty much as it pleased with impunity; and a man who merited the rope for a score of crimes might—though he seldom did—haul off at length to finish his declining years rich and respected in some other quarter of the globe"

(A Two-Part Story—Part One)

CHAPTER I.

PART of this tale I got from the woman herself, Helen Crowther I shall call her—the names of all the folk concerned are, of course, fictitious—and part I got from Saul Crowther's diary, with several interesting side lights from other people. The best of it, or the worst, came straight from the lips of one Jimmy McCann, that wild but philosophic adventurer and, as I believe, an honest man.

From these various sources I have reconstructed people and events as I think that they must have been, and, though in order to present the circumstances vividly it is at times necessary to romanticize and to put words in the mouths of the actors which they may have expressed differently, I believe that in substance I cannot have gone far wrong. It is a tale of life in the Pacific when much lawlessness obtained; when the unregenerate white element could do pretty much as it pleased with impunity, and a man who merited the rope for a score of crimes might—though he seldom did—haul off at length to finish his declining years rich and respected in some other quarter of the globe. The Pacific seldom followed up these scores; once quit of her debtor, she turned her attention to other and more pressing current accounts, and his name only remained to elicit a sort of disapproving admiration going down vaguely as a reminiscence of "the good old days." Those good old days when natives were maltreated and debauched and bloody battles were waged between rival traders and pearl or seal thieves, and vessels were cut off and missionaries hated by most and their presence resented by the rest. "Oh, those good old days!"

An early missionary whom nobody ever trod on with impunity was the Reverend Samuel Crowther, a Presbyterian, of Salem, Massachusetts, a good man and a strong, who preached hell fire with courage and conviction. The Reverend Crowther was a zealot who came of harsh, Yankee seafaring stock, and himself a master mariner when ordained. He appears to have considered himself rather in the light of God's bosn's mate and carried out divine instructions by word of mouth and the strength of his gaunt, muscular frame. Had he been a Catholic bishop—which prelate he would have regarded with abomination—his bell, book, and candle might have been represented by the ship's bell, the log book, and the chart-room standing light swinging in its gimbals. His miter would have been a sou'wester, and his gavel a belaying pin. But he did his work, saving souls and bodies, too, and made his presence felt

over a very considerable area of blue sea and scattered islands.

The Reverend Crowther was a wealthy man, a widower; and, aside from a certain sympathy which he professed for converts and repentant sinners, all of the tenderness of his bleak nature was centered in his little son, Saul, a dreamy, imaginative boy, with the dark, lustrous eyes of a seal and in all but religious conviction about as different an individual from his craggy parent as it is possible to imagine. Saul's mother had French Canadian blood, and it is probable that he inherited his traits from her. He sailed with his father to the Pacific, returning later to Boston, where he graduated at Harvard University and entered the School of Theology with the object of carrying on his father's missionary work in the Pacific. This in time he did; and I get my first impression of Saul from Jimmy McCann, who was skipper of Reverend Crother's missionary schooner when Saul arrived on the island which I shall call Mauee, where was located the home mission:

"A sweet lad, sor, wit' the face of a young prophet and the eyes of a lover. He was tall and slender, but well knit, and no weaklin' ayther in mind or body. But for dealin' wit' the hard-flung crowd that sailed around in thim days he was about as fit as might be a young girrl. 'He will last as long as a holluschickie in a school o' tiger sharks,' said I to the master. 'No fear,' says he; 'the lad has courage and resolution. He is the stuff that martyrs are made of,' says he. ''Tis just that which troubles me,' I made bold to answer. 'There is all the chance for makin' martyrs here, barrin' only the lack of raw material.' An awful look came into the face of the master, and vanished as soon. 'I have no fears, McCann,' says he. 'The Lord protects His chosen servants. D'ye mind how I was delivered from the hands of the unrighteous that time in Kialu?' says he. 'Nivir will I forget it, sor,' I answered, 'nor how you rose in righteous wrat' and smote thim hip and thigh! But the dear lad has not his father's stren'th of arrum.'

"He said little to this, but 'twas plain he was uneasy in his mind. I saw his cold gray eyes turn to the Riverind Saul, who was talkin' to a bunch of natives, and the softenin' of his hard ould face was won'erful. You must know, sir, that he was plannin' to sail for Frisco be the next schooner, Cap'n Billy Connors' *Favorite*, leavin' the boy in charge. I wondered he could find it in his hearrt to go, knowin' his love for the lad, but belike he had his reasons. 'The Lord will guide his footsteps, McCann,' says he, 'and, besides, you will be here.' 'Not all the time, sor,' says I, for the mission had stations in adjacent islands and owned some plantations that needed watchful care and this was part of my worruk."

Whatever may have been his misgivings, the elder Crowther apparently considered it his duty to return to Massachusetts, and he was not the man to spare his personal feelings where it was a question of duty. Perhaps he wished to raise more money for the work, and perhaps also he wished to put Saul to the test. At any rate, he went, and apparently the Lord's vigilance must have been relaxed a little in the elder Crowther's regard, as in crossing the continent he was the victim of a railroad accident which cost him the loss of a leg and finally landed him in Boston crippled and semi-invalid.

Meanwhile, Saul directed the mission, and, from all accounts, managed uncommonly well. He had qualities which endeared him to the natives, and such of the rough white element as his work brought him in contact with appeared to like and esteem him and seldom caused him any great anxiety. There must have been a good deal of magnetism about the boy, and much that was lovable, and his appeals to the better natures of that early, ill-set crowd were seldom in vain. I heard of several cases where he was able to forestall "blackbirding" voyages, and according to Jimmy McCann his influence with the various chiefs of the archipelago was unlimited.

"They loved him, sor," said Jimmy, "and that same cut deeper than the re-

spect and fear they had av the ould man. The fear they had of the master was his crowdin' persistence, backed be a pale, glarin' eye and a tongue like a searchin' flame o' reproof for the backslider. He got their promises, and when they bruk them, which was frequent, they were ill at ease until he had it out with thim. And yet they owed him nothing to which they could put a value.

"But with Saul it was different. Obsarvin' his methods wit' thim, I was glad the ould man had gone away—else betwixt them they might have spoiled it all. For Saul, though not island born, had grown up out there from a little lad of six, and he had an understandin' av the place and people that the master c'u'd nivir have gained in a hunderd years. He *felt* wit' thim natives, though he thought alone, and he did not try to change their ways. Says he to me, one day: 'Jimmy,' says he, 'I haven't much sympathy with this fear-of-God doctrine. It smacks too much of the precipitatin' worship of pagans.' 'Save us, lad,' says I. 'Do not say that to your father, or he would try ye for heresy.' He smiled. 'I wish to teach them to *love* Him,' says he. 'Between you and me, there has always been too much of the big stick in father's parables. If fear is the only way to hold them, they might as well stick to the worship of their own Tiapolo. Nor are a lot of flimsy clothes the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Besides, they get wet and give them fever——' and there was a good deal more of the same in his methods. The ould man w'u'd have had a fit, and I feared for the result."

From all of this I gather that the Reverend Saul was broad and lenient and sensible in his teachings. He does not appear to have made any great effort to discourage polygamy, but he was relentless in his censure of alcohol, which he rightly regarded as the worst enemy to proper living and the hope of enlightenment, and he did much to abolish its indulgence within his sphere of activity. Altogether he seems to have been doing excellent work in his quiet, gentle way when there came a serious interruption to his labors.

CHAPTER II.

One day Saul was sitting on the veranda of the mission bungalow, writing a lengthy epistle to his father, when he saw a heavy yawl beating up into the lagoon, coming presently to anchor off the beach. From it disembarked a short, fat, white man with a very red face, who landed and made his way to the bungalow. Paul, rising to receive this visitor, observed that he was a benevolent-looking gentleman of about fifty-five with a white mustache and goatee, a huge paunch, and a face of such vivid vermilion hue that a geranium would have looked green against it. He seemed rather surprised at sight of Saul.

"How do you do?" said he. "I am Captain Hans Müller, of Amsterdam and Fiji. Is the Reverend Mr. Crowther here?"

"No," said Saul, offering his hand with a smile, "my father has returned to the States for a few months. I am the Reverend Saul Crowther, and have come here to carry on our work." And he offered his guest a chair. Captain Müller took off his panama and polished a cranium as smooth and hairless as an ostrich egg.

"Do you know Harry Livingstone, the trader at Tiapu?" Müller asked.

"I know of him," Saul answered. He had heard his father speak of Livingstone as one of the most besotted old reprobates in Polynesia.

"He is dying," said Müller. "I have just come from there."

"I am sorry," said Saul politely. "What is he dying of?"

Müller spread his hands, which were small, well shaped, and heavily beringed. "Ach—a great many things. Say 'drink,' and all is said. His heart has gone back on him, and he is full of dropsy, and to make matters worse he was leaning against the rail of his veranda and it broke and he fell and broke some ribs. He feels that he has

done for himself, and wants mooch to see your father. I have come fifty miles out of my course to deliver the message. Harry is a goot old sport, but that is the difficulty. He should have stuck to beer, like me——" and he regarded Saul with a sort of doubtful expectancy. The good captain had run out of beer. Fortunately for his enjoyment, the elder Crowther did not share Saul's strong teetotal views, and liked his glass of strong waters at the end of the day's work. Saul knew that his father at times drank deep and hard, and deplored the fact, but had never protested. So, now, with his charming grace he deplored his lack of beer, but offered his guest old Medford rum in its place, whereat the good captain brightened visibly. It was evident that his fidelity to beer was not unswerving.

"Ach, it is a pity," sighed Müller, with resigntion. "Harry is one of the old crowd. There are not many left. Are you a doctor, sir?"

"I have studied medicine," Saul answered.

"Then perhaps you might do something for Harry, if you would care to try," said Müller. "Yust a little run of a hundred miles. If you could patch him up enough to get to Apia, he would be very happy. He does not care about himself; it is his daughter."

"His daughter?"

"Yes. A lovely girl. Her mother is dead. She was Danish, and very beautiful. Your father married them. If Harry dies, she will have nobody on Tiapu to protect her but Papamama, as we call him—the chief—and he is not a goot protector for young girls."

"Hardly the right sort of guardian," Saul murmured.

"No. He is too young, very handsome, and a giant. I have never seen so fine a specimen. Also he is a goot fellow and very jolly. He is well educated and speaks English better than me. Pure chief stock, which is to say Caucasian, like us. But girls are his weakness, and Harry has taught him to drink. Now he is afraid. Papamama is a goot young man, and there is no bad in him at all, but he considers himself to be a king and girls are his weakness. So Harry is afraid to die on Tiapu. Although he likes Papamama and respects him——"

By this time Saul had decided that it was his obvious duty to go at once to Tiapu. He asked Müller if he thought that in the event of Livingstone's immediate demise the king would make any objection to his undertaking the guardianship of the young girl, whose name was Helen, until the return of the elder Crowther. (He did not know at this time of his father's accident.) Müller seemed rather surprised.

"Of course not," said he. "Papamama is a gentleman—yust like you and me. He will do whatever Harry says. He is very fond of Harry. We all like Harry."

So the worthy captain departed on his course for Fiji, and Saul followed him out in the mission schooner *Nazareth,* and stood away for Tiapu, where he arrived the following day at noon. The description of his advent I have from King Papamama, whose acquaintance I made—or perhaps I should say "to whom I was presented"—in the bar of the Palace Hotel, San Francisco.

"Good old Hally was on his last legs," said the king—he had come to put the lumpish crown prince in school—"and I wasn't feeling velly happy because I knew I'd miss Hally like the devil." It is impossible to express Papamama's "r" sounds in print. They were not "r's," nor yet quite "l's," but approaching the latter. "Hally was well wate'-logged and fighting for bleath and tlying to tell me something about Helen, and I was tlying to lite it down when a boy came lunning to the bungalow and said the *Nazaleth* was coming in. Hally blightened up, and I gave a yelp of joy and went and dlank a whole bottle of gin befo' going down to meet old Clowtha. Between you and me, docta, I neve' liked Clowtha much, but I knew he was all light and a dam' good se'vant of Chlist." Papamama was mission educated before being sent to school and college. "But you can imagine my su'plise when, in-

stead of old Clowtha, who looks more like a Yankee whale-ship skippe' than a missionaly, here was a nice young chap with a pleasant smile and eyes like a *fafiné* (sweetheart). Jimmy McCann presented him. 'I am very glad to see you,' said I. 'Hally is dam' bad. Outwa'd bound, I fear. Poor old Hally——'" The king sighed like a grampus coming up to blow, then clapped his hands and ordered more drinks.

He was a striking figure, King Papamama; six feet four, superbly made, with a handsome, good-humored face and big, lustrous, brown eyes which for all of their loving jollity had nothing soft in their expression. He was well educated, rich, and no fool as a business man. At my request he resumed his narrative.

"Hally was slipping his cable fast," said he. "When Saul was looking him over he could hardly speak, but Saul gave him some strychnia and digitalis, and that seemed to buck him up for a bit. He was jolly wollied about Helen, though he needn't have been as I'd plomised to look after her and mally her to some good chap when the time came. But Hally seemed to feel she ought to glow up among her own people, and wanted her sent back to England to his blother, Sir George Livingstone. Meantime, he wanted old Clowtha to take her in charge. Hally hated George like hell, but when it was a question of Helen it was another matter. Hello, Billy!" We were joined at this moment by Captain Billy Connors, who had brought the king and crown prince to Frisco. "Docta, let me plesent Captain Connors. Docta Lowland, Billy. You have my permission to sit down, Billy. What will you have to dlink?"

Another side light which has to do with the meeting between Saul and Helen is furnished by Jimmy McCann.

"Ould Livingstone looked to be drownin' in his own sap when we wint into the bungalow, sor," said he, "and I misdoubted he would spake agen. But Saul gets out his gear—the lad was a natural doctor and had taken courses in th' School av Medicine and I never saw him at a loss—and squirts a slug av dope into his arrum, and a few minutes later the rattlin' ceased and he was breathin' easier. Be that time our eyes was less blinded by comin' from the glare outside into the darkened room, and Saul, lookin' up from the dyin' man, took note of Helen, and so did I.

"'Tis not for the likes of me to describe her, doctor. A flame of a girrl she was, wit' hair like the red, burnished copper av the *Nazareth*, new scoured and heelin' to the draft av the trades. Her eyes were bluey-black, like the sea of a clear night, and the build of her and the way she moved, never leavin' a ripple in her wake, put me in mind av a racin' yacht, light and strong and fine av swellin' curves. She c'u'd not have been over eighteen at the time, but she was ripe and sweet as a perfect mango fruit, and the soft skin of her lovely face had the same golden yellow, by reason av the tropic sun, wit' the ruddy flush glowin' up from beneat'.

"Starin' at her in the gloom, I wondered she was not more pale and droopin', and she at the deathbed of her father, but divil a bit. Her eyes was fixed on Saul, ministerin' to this ould water-logged souse, and they burrned through the gloom of that darkened room. I misdoubt ould Livingstone meant much to her, though always kind in his drunken way. But no woman can love a drunkard from her hearrt out, whether he be father or husband or lover or brother. Her son, yes, but mother love is what thim insurance sharks would call an 'incontestable policy.' It takes no heed av human philosophy and the price av potatoes.

"In that moment Saul looked up, and their eyes met. Niver a flicker in his nor in hers no more, but I felt like a mass was bein' said. Ould Livingstone begins to mutter and Saul stoops down to listen. 'Yes—yes,' says Saul's soft, gentle voice; 'don't worry about that—nivir mind,' says he, 'we'll find a way—yes, you have my promise—just as soon as it can be arranged——' says he, and from that and such odd worrds

as reached me ears 'twas easy to gather that Livingstone was tormented at thought of what might befall the daughter. 'Twas curious, doctor; she dry-eyed and starin' at Saul, him takin' no heed of her as he comforted the dyin' man, me who had nivir any consideration for the ould vagabone standin' there wit' streamin' eyes, and Papamama shored up ag'inst the wall sobbin' like a lost child be reason of his kind hearrt and two squareheads of gin."

CHAPTER III.

The next day they interred the recreant Harry, whom Saul's treatment had enabled to die far more decently than he had ever lived—he cleared up just before the finish and made a few dignified remarks which revealed the gentleman he must have been at one time—and then, after taking friendly and ceremonious leave of Papamama, who gave them his permission to depart, they disposed Helen comfortably aboard the *Nazareth* and laid their course for Mauee, where they duly arrived.

Saul must then have been confronted with a rather trying situation. Here he was in the mission bungalow, which was occupied exclusively by himself and a flamboyant beauty of a girl who had fallen so violently in love with him at first sight that the intervening deathbed of her father had offered no appreciable obstacle. Moreover, she was an untaught girl, and, although of good race, as primitive in her emotions as the Polynesian maidens with whom she had been reared. She could scarcely read and write, and all of her ideas on ethics were Kanaka ideas. But the science and art of love-making is pretty much the same the world around, and Helen immediately began to woo Saul with a naïve and passionate ardor which must have given him many feverish hours, as Saul, though gentle, was far from being cold.

He was obliged to observe her glowing beauty in manifold guises: at meals, drowsing in a hammock, or *en deshabille*—the artful Eve!—or fresh and sparkling, her ruddy hair adrift as she came singing and flower-crowned up from her bath in the sea surrounded by a bevy of dusky, laughing handmaidens.

Yes, it must really have been very hard on Saul. Such temptation as might have been offered by native girls he had found not difficult to thrust aside by virtue of his responsibilities and the difference of their caste. He was the shepherd dog and they the lambs which his moral obligation compelled him to protect, and he would no more have thought of failing in this duty than would a true-hearted collie have thought of dragging down a ewe lamb. For a young man of twenty-seven, full of life and fire, even though the flame be sacred, it must have been cruelly trying to be awakened from an early-afternoon siesta by a pair of fresh lips crushed against his own and two soft, bare arms about his neck. Saul, of course, forbade such demonstrations, but not always with success, as there was a great deal of perversity in Helen and she was very much in love.

What made it even worse was that Saul was gradually falling in love with the girl entirely against the warnings of his mind and his high sense of honor; this latter because he considered himself in a manner pledged to a Massachusetts maiden who had agreed to share his life at some future, undetermined date when she might be relieved of the home responsibilities which at that time bound her. She was a courageous and sensible girl and had not permitted Saul to bind himself, nor had she given him a positive promise, but there was a sort of tacit understanding to which Saul gave undue importance. He did not consider himself to be a free agent, or it is probable that in a moment of hot-headedness he might have married Helen, if only for the sake of peace. As it was, he fought continually against his growing passion and prayed that his father might soon return.

Then came the news of the Reverend Crowther's accident, the loss of his leg, and the ensuing blow to his rugged

health. At first Saul decided to sail at once for Samoa, there to take ship for the United States, Helen, of course, accompanying him. But there was nobody to fill his place, and it seemed impossible to leave at that moment without jeopardizing the welfare of the mission and possibly ruining the work of years. He felt that his sacred duty compelled him to remain with his flock, and he knew that his father would wish him to do so. In fact, the Reverend Crowther would have been infinitely distressed had Saul done otherwise. Most of the above I got from Saul's diary, with a hint or two on the state of affairs from Jimmy McCann.

"She was fair mad for him, sor," said he, "and small wonder, for he was a handsome lad wit' the strong, pure sowl av a prophet. Nivertheless I c'u'd not help but wonder how long he w'u'd hold out, for the lass had a way wit' her and was not one to be thrust aside. How he managed it I dinnaw. Not wan man in a hunderd c'u'd have withstood the soft blandishments av her for three days. But Saul was strong of will and conscience and divil a bit did he bend. For three long months he played the big brother, and she might as well have spent her kissin's and cajolin's on a graven image, for all he let himself be coaxed. And he grew thin. Small wonder, and the pizen workin' in his veins. Thin came the ould man's letter tellin' av his accident, and I says to mesilf: 'Jimmy, me lad, what price apples on this island?' For ye see, sor, Saul was hopin' that his father might soon come to the relief av the garrison, sinding the lass back to England or givin' Saul a furlough to recuperate his moril stren'th.

"Thin came the denooment. Wan night as I was smokin' me pipe aboard the *Nazareth*, out comes Saul, and the minute he stepped on deck I piped there was somethin' gone wrong. He was tremblin' like a man wit' fever, and fever was unknown on Mauee.

"'I want to go to Apia, Jimmy,' says he. 'Can we sail to-morrow morning?'

"'We can,' I answered, wonderin' what business was takin' him to Apia. No doubt he read me thought for, says he:

"'We're going to be married, Jimmy.'

"'God bless you both, sor,' says I, tryin' to speak hearty. To tell the trut', sor, me heart was like lead at this news. I did not think that she was the proper mate for Saul. 'Twixt her and a Kanaka girrl was only the difference av race, which is not so great as many think. But she was island born and island bred, and many av the mission natives was better educated and better mannered. No fault of hers, poor lass. Had it not been Saul I c'u'd have found it fittin' and proper, but for him, wit' his grrand education and the fineness av him, it seemed a pity. He felt what was passin' in me mind.

"'Do you approve, Jimmy?' he asked, in his soft, shy voice.

"'Av course I do, sor,' I answered. 'How c'u'd I not?'

"He gave a short laugh. 'You don't always tell the truth, do you, Jimmy?' says he, not askin' the question, but statin' the fact.

"'Do you, lad?' I asked.

"'I try to,' he answers. 'Annyhow, we'll sail to-morrow morning.'"

CHAPTER IV.

But they did not sail. Some fortuitous circumstance wafted into the lagoon during the moonlit night the little missionary brig *Consecrated Way*, with the Reverend John Ames aboard. (He was shortly afterward murdered in the Solomon Islands, and a man called "Silverside" had much to do with squaring accounts.) "The Reverend Jack," as he was known, had come to Mauee to confer with his confrère Crowther on measures to be taken for the suppression of one Eric Hughes, a blackguard of much evil ability, who had been infesting Polynesia for many months, and apparently rejoicing in his unpunished defiance of all the laws of God and man. Nobody seemed to know much about this man Hughes, but there was no end of rumors adrift. You could scap up the one which

pleased you best, and swear to its truth, and get adherents to this theory in any barroom. Some claimed that he was the illegitimate son of a former governor—they had his origin all the way up to crowned heads; others that he was a vicious and capricious millionaire, who liked to sail around and raise the devil just for the fun of the thing. Another opinion was that he was the son of an English bishop and had turned rank, found a pearl island somewhere, and that his evil conduct was due to a restricted boyhood, and represented the suppressed desires of his pa. One certain thing was that he rolled in money, gambled for enormous stakes, and that his favorite pastime was stealing girls and undoing the labors of the various missions. He did not drink, and his manners were deceptively mild. He was unquestionably well educated, and a skillful and daring navigator. I subsequently discovered that he was a New Yorker, the scapegrace son of a multimillionaire, and that he had taken a degree at Oxford, with a postgraduate course in Matteawan Asylum for the criminally insane, because alienists had found him a victim of "brain storms" and homicidal impulses.

Physically Hughes—as he called himself—was nothing out of the ordinary, being of medium size, well built, rather dark of complexion, with vivid blue eyes, and a handsome face, with high, strong, and rather cruel features. Something about his nose, jaw, and the deep lines of his cheeks, together with the set of his eyes, suggested the early Puritan, or a Yankee whaler as depicted by the late Howard Pyle. His age might have been forty, and the last five years of it had been spent careering about the Pacific in a fast and able schooner of about one hundred and fifty tons, which had once been a smart yacht. Hughes' crew was a mixed crowd of various nationalities, and, like the master, seemed always well supplied with cash.

For the past few years his immunity from justice for various misdeeds seemed really to suggest protection from some powerful quarter, but honest folk were getting fed up on him and his escapades, and it was with the idea of preferring certain charges that the Rev. Jack had come to Mauee to advise with Crowther. A good man, John Ames, and in his methods of work sort of a compromise between the Crowthers, *père et fils*. He was strong and kindly, but had made a few bitter enemies, one of whom was destined to be his bane. But that story has been already told.

Now, if Ames had landed on Mauee a day or two earlier, it is probable that Saul would have prevailed upon him to undertake the care of Helen, and all the trouble and tragedy would have been averted. But the fat was already in the fire; he had told the exultant girl that they were to be married, and he would not go back upon his word. No doubt, also, having arrived at this decision after a long course of rending emotions, he was glad of it, and as eager for the event as Helen herself. So he bashfully explained the situation to his kindly confrère, who gave the matter his full sanction, and warmly congratulated the pair.

"You are acting wisely," said he to Saul. "'It is not good for man to live alone . . .' especially at your age and in Polynesia. It really is no drawback that Helen is practically unlettered, and with no knowledge of the outer world. You can undertake her education yourself, and so far as her mundane experience is concerned, I should consider its lack in the nature of an advantage. She will be the more content to share the life to which you are consecrated."

So he rolled up his sleeves and spliced them good and hard, and Jimmy McCann was master of ceremonies, and, with the enthusiastic assistance of the whole community, arranged the wedding feast.

According to Jimmy, they must have been radiantly happy during the weeks which followed. "They walked in love and beauty, sor," said he poetically; "they swam in it. If ever ye were given to daydreamin', whether on the sunny slope of a hillside in the month o' May,

wit' the hawthorn in bloom and a lark singin' out his soul in the blue, or maybe drowsin' on deck under the spill av the foresail and weavin' fancies for your own delight, ye may catch a notion av thim two. Young and sweet and strong, planted there on Mauee wit' a guardian sea for leagues about, and all the child-hearted folk there so pleased and happy and lovin' thim and their love."

It must truly have been a *paradis à deux*, and for a month or two Saul appears to have been completely englamoured. It is doubtful if in all of his life he had ever permitted his thoughts to dwell for a second upon such raptures as now enveloped him, body and soul, and the reaction was bound to come. There were several reasons for this. In the first place, Helen's attraction for him had been purely physical from the very beginning. Her ignorance, and probably the character of her mind as well, made any attempt at intellectual intercourse practically impossible. Then also she was a good deal of a pagan at heart, and while she may at first have listened to Saul's spiritual converse with a certain amount of patient indulgence, it soon began to weary her. She was merely a passionate primitive, and her aspirations and desires confined to the flesh. The waning of the honeymoon left Saul a prey to gloomy doubts as to the wisdom of his marriage, and, being young and inexperienced, he may have made insufficient effort to conceal them.

Besides this, Helen's temperament was infused with a ruthlessness of speech and action when roused to anger by jealousy or neglect. She had the violence of a native or a child and a recklessness which did not count the cost. Once she got it into her head that Saul was beginning to regret having married her she became the prey of sudden gusts of resentment which took various unpleasant forms and were often followed by a period of sulks. She knew that Saul abominated alcohol, and on several occasions, in his short absence of some few hours, she found access to the Medford rum and got the chiefs drunk. Her father had been a blasphemous old scoundrel in his cups, and Helen could swear like a second mate, and sometimes did so for the vicious pleasure of seeing Saul squirm. She was careless, too, about the exposure of her lovely person, and must have shocked her young Galahad of a husband horribly at times, though the chances are that nobody else on Mauee would have taken the trouble to be scandalized.

Altogether Saul must have had a pretty trying time of it on occasions which were growing sadly frequent, and he appears to have been utterly inadequate to cope with the situation. The chances are that if he had accepted her in the light of a naughty, willful child and given her a splendid whipping with a young bamboo, it would have done her a world of good and effectually controlled these tantrums, but the mere idea of such a course of sprouts would have filled him with inexpressible horror. Instead, he did the very worst thing possible for his domestic peace by throwing himself with hectic energy into his mission work and showing his disapproval by depriving her of his own intimacy when she fell into a mood of semirepentant tenderness. Certain extracts from his diary show how his sensitive nature must have suffered at times, though he scrupulously recorded whatever fault there was as entirely his own. For instance:

December 24th. Christmas Eve, and I pray that I may never again pass this divine beacon for the salvage of souls in such stormy seas. The day started badly for me, Helen being vexed because I insisted on taking the whaleboat and sailing across to hold a service in the chapel at Kelua and distribute a few gifts. When I asked her to go with me, she declined, saying that from the way I had been treating her recently she thought I would have a nicer time without her, and no argument of mine could overcome her stubbornness. This was evidently enough the result of my reproof last night, when she insisted on voicing certain blasphemous commentaries on the Immaculate Conception which she had apparently overheard her father drunkenly expounding. So I went without her, and feeling very unhappy and with no zest in my errand and the pleasure which I

had hoped to give our good friends on Kelua, who have always shown themselves so loyal. The boat was deep laden with stuff that Captain Connors had brought me——

. Among this consignment which Saul had ordered was his Christmas present to Helen—a gold watch of Geneva fabrication and set in brilliants and rubies, with a fine-meshed chain to loop about her neck. It had cost him one hundred and fifty pounds at the leading jewelers in Sydney—which was a tremendous sum for those days—and the choice of the gift had been the topic of animated argument between Captain Billy Connors and Jimmy McCann, Saul listening with interest. He had wished to give her a jeweled cross or Madonna cameo or something of the sort. The cost did not matter particularly, as the Reverend Crowther owned-in in many ships and had vast sea acres and blocks in Boston. He never audited Saul's accounts, and seemed rather disappointed at his "little boy's" economies when in college.

These two grizzled sea dogs were intensely interested in the gift, and advised upon it with the wisdom of their experience. Children and natives love gold chains and bright jewels, and, above all, watches which tick and prove the day to be running on schedule time. So this was their intelligent selection, and Saul was thinking how pleased Helen would be, and looking forward with anticipation to her delight. And now it seemed predestined to failure because of her petulance. He returned heavy-hearted from Kelua, and found that she had got the chiefs drunk with "old New England." Having finally disposed of them, he tried to make his peace with her. But she had drunk some punch, and felt cross and headachy. Then he fished out his present and hung it about her neck, and in a sudden revulsion of feeling she loved him ardently. So there you have the type.

CHAPTER V.

Matters were at this pass when an ill wind brought Eric Hughes to Mauee. Perhaps he felt the coils tightening about him and wished to make his peace with the Reverend Crowther, or perhaps he had learned that Helen was there and put in on mischief bent. He had known "good old Harry Livingstone," and he had known Helen, and kept her in mind. Certain rumors of Saul's gentle administration may have reached him and given piquancy to the affair. Nothing could possibly have held more attraction for Hughes.

Whatever his motive, his long, lean schooner crept into the lagoon like a thief in the night, and Saul was informed of her presence rather to his consternation. After all he had heard of Hughes he certainly had no wish to receive him, while not to do so would seem to argue fear or gratuitous hostility or—what was even more repugnant to Saul—a surly lack of island hospitality. A blackguard Hughes might be, but Saul was not aware of any injury ever done by the man to him or his, and it was not as though he had been some foul pirate of gutter origin. Everybody admitted him to be a gentleman in all but moral conduct, and it occurred to Saul that he might possibly influence this latter in some way for good.

One thing which bothered him a little was Helen's obvious excitement over Hughes' arrival, and Saul could not quite determine whether this was agreeable or not.

"Do you know him very well?" he asked, and noted uneasily the deep flush which rose in her cheeks.

"Yes, rather," she answered, her back turned to him as she rummaged through her wardrobe for her best frock, tossing aside one article of clothing after another with short exclamations of impatience. Her lack of tidiness in the care of her things had frequently distressed Saul, who was rather fastidious and the soul of order.

"When did you see him last?" he inquired.

"About two years ago. He stopped for about a month in Kelua and won all of dad's and Papamama's ready cash. Then he suggested that dad put me up against a thousand pounds." She gave her rippling, seductive laugh. Saul's

face darkened. "Dad might have taken him on, but Papamama was very angry and told Hughes that he had his permission to clear out and not come back, so there was nothing for him to do but go. Papamama can be very nasty when displeased, and he had got the idea in his head that Eric had been swindling him and dad when they were drunk. Eric never drank."

"You call him Eric?"

"Yes, we all called him Eric. Papamama kept me under guard until he had sailed. He seemed to think that Eric might steal me. Eric tried to patch things up and stay on, but it was no good. Once the king makes up his mind there's no budging him. He would not even let Eric say good-by to me," and her laugh trilled out again. Saul, watching her with a frown, observed that the swarthy flush remained upon her face.

"Were you—very good friends?" he asked.

Helen shrugged. "I was only a child," she answered; "just sixteen. He gave me a lot of presents and promised to bring me some more the next time he came."

"Then you were fond of him?"

"Oh, I don't know," she answered evasively. "I scarcely ever saw any white men, and I thought him very nice. Dad said he was a damned scoundrel, and perhaps he was——" She occupied herself with a white muslin gown which she had some difficulty getting into, as her slenderness was giving way to fuller proportions of hip and bust. She must have been very lovely at this time.

"That dress is intended for evening wear, is it not?" Saul asked.

Helen looked at him doubtfully. "Do you think so?" she asked. "I'm sure I don't know," she answered. "Do you think it is pretty?"

"Very," he answered, "and so are you, my dear——" He stared at her for a moment with glowing eyes, then caught her in his arms and kissed her. She returned his caress warmly and with the dreamy-eyed languor which seemed to possess her at such moments. Saul would have done well had he made them more frequent, but on finding his ecclesiastical legs again after the first deluge of conjugal bliss which had swept him along on the crest of the wave for some weeks he appears to have experienced a sort of shame at his temporary detachment from things spiritual and tried to compensate by a certain self-abnegation. This may have been good for his soul, though of doubtful benefit to that of his bride's, Helen having scant spirituality to serve as a counterweight. Saul's rather protracted evening orisons must have put her out of patience and aroused her resentment as a slight upon the shrine where she officiated as high priestess. No doubt she felt with Omar: "When all the temple is prepared within, why nods the drowsy worshiper outside?"

That for which she had far greater respect and interest was Saul's knowledge of the polite society of the great outer world, and she would listen with the intense absorption of a child being told a fairy tale to his descriptions of house parties and banquets and dances, and—oh, rare delight!—the theater. Saul's ideas were broad in regard to such amusements, and he had enjoyed them when opportunity offered, which had been constant during his university career, for he was very popular and his father had given him *carte blanche* in the matter of spending money, feeling, no doubt, that as one destined to devote his life working to the glory of God in regions remote from his own kind, he was entitled to all the harmless pleasures that could be crowded into his youth. Besides, it must be remembered that the Reverend Crowther adored his "little boy" and that Saul probably represented the one soft and tender pasture of his somewhat arid soul.

So now when Saul told Helen that he thought a simpler frock would be more in keeping she readily accepted the suggestion, and made herself radiantly lovely in the simplest gown of corn-colored pongee silk, loose of blouse and short of skirt, collarless and with elbow sleeves. Her satin skin had acquired

the soft ivory tan of the tropics, and she had never learned to wear stays, of which she stood in not the slightest need. Saul, watching her at her toilet, wondered if the whole wide world contained as beautiful and physically perfect a girl. Then he looked out at the Hughes schooner, *Proserpine,* and regretted having sent Jimmy McCann on a fortnight's voyage in the archipelago. There was no fear in Saul, nor any dread of Hughes, but he valued Jimmy's shrewd sense and wide knowledge of men and things.

Hughes politely accepted his invitation to *déjeuner,* and Saul was agreeably impressed at the man's quiet air of good breeding and pleasant manners. Helen was in something of a flutter at meeting him, but Hughes' respectful compliments left nothing to be desired. A more keen observer than Saul would not have missed the lightening of his pale-gray eyes as they rested on the girl, nor Helen's waves of rich color under his brief scrutiny.

"I'm sorry not to find your father here," said he to Saul, as though in answer to an unasked question, "because I've learned that there's a sort of conspiracy afoot to prefer certain unjust charges against me, and I wanted to appeal to his sense of fairness. No use going into the details now, but really I'm a wrongly accused man. John Ames has got it in for me, thanks to a lot of silly island gossip, and he'd prejudice your father if he could, but I know that, while the Reverend Crowther disapproves me thoroughly, he's not the man to bear false witness against his neighbor."

Saul told him of his father's accident and that he feared him to be a confirmed invalid, then asked the cause of Hughes' trouble. He had already been thoroughly informed by the Reverend Ames, but he wished to hear what Hughes would say. So Hughes, nothing loath, gave him quite a different version of a sinister tale which, as it has no direct bearing upon our own, does not require narration. Suffice to say it had to do with a passenger list of young native girls conveyed by Hughes to a certain metropolis of the South Pacific for the sake of supplying a deficiency in domestic labor. Hughes must at this time have met with gambling reverses and been hard pressed for ready money. At any rate, his explanations were so credible that Saul was inclined to sympathize with him as a person misjudged because of a past of reckless living. He gave him some excellent advice, and then, as Hughes expressed a desire to careen and clean his schooner's bottom on the beach of the lagoon, Saul offered to put a small, adjoining bungalow at his disposal while the work was being done. Considering the reputation of the man, it seems incredible that he could have let his hospitality so get away with his common sense, but either Hughes managed to convince him of his honest intentions, or else he may have thought it his duty to try his hand at reformation. (The British colonial government once tried the same thing with Sir Henry Morgan, the pirate, in appointing him governor of Jamaica, but the result was not brilliant.)

At any rate, Hughes occupied a bungalow about two hundred yards from Saul's, and he appears to have conducted himself with great discretion while the work on the *Proserpine* proceeded with amazing lethargy. But the cleaning, which had to be done at low tide, showed the copper sheathing to be pretty well loosened throughout, and seams beneath it which required recalking, and at the end of ten days the job was only about half finished. This did not trouble Saul. He enjoyed Hughes' society and conversation, and began to flatter himself that he was making some very actual impression on the man's mistaken principles. Trust Hughes for thus bamboozling him! That was his long suit.

The first disquiet Saul was caused by his presence there came from the change in Helen's behavior. Had they been alone he might have considered it in the light of an improvement, and as the sign of the tranquillizing effect of his gentle maxims and temperate example. Her manners were growing

more moderate in a number of ways. She appeared to be making an effort to control her quick tongue and not to indulge in her previous expressions of impatience. At times, when in a temper, she had been wont to swear like a drunken sailor, and Saul had never rebuked her too severely, realizing what her education had been. She also seemed to be acquiring some idea of modesty. She had her own room now, and where formerly she had appeared unconscious of lack of attire in his presence she now slipped into a peignoir or kimono. Another change was in her demonstrations of ardor toward himself, and although she seemed as affectionate as ever the gusts of passion which had at times assailed her were moderated almost to the vanishing point.

Saul tried to persuade himself that these changes were for the better, but one doubts that he was entirely successful. If he associated Hughes with these alterations in his wife's conduct, it was not in any blameworthy sense. The two men had by this time become quite intimate, and Hughes always revealed himself so very much the quiet-mannered, well-educated gentleman and an interesting and sympathetic companion that Saul felt that he should greatly miss him when, the work on his schooner finished, the place would know him no more. Hughes' attitude toward Helen seemed all that one could desire —quiet, respectful, and with the hint of a paternal manner, as seemed befitting in a finished man of the world old enough to be her father.

Saul ascribed such influence as he might have had on Helen's altered actions to commentaries on society which she had heard exchanged between the two men and to which she was always an avid listener, never interrupting. It was probable, Saul thought, that these were the first ideas she had ever received in regard to the manner in which cultured folk comported themselves and that she desired to emulate these Olympians.

Poor Saul! It was quite a different brand of Olympian that appealed to Helen, who was the creator of her classic prototype, one Helen of Troy. She was falling rapidly under the spell of Hughes' fascination, and he knew it and was no doubt smiling with a sort of ironic anticipation as he played his sneaking part.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE FEBRUARY 20TH POPULAR.

FRANK HITCHCOCK'S LOSS

IT was a week before the opening of the Republican National Convention at Chicago last June. Frank H. Hitchcock had just arrived to take unauthorized, but ultimately successful, charge of the Hughes boom. It had been rumored by anti-Hughes men that Hitchcock already had corralled a bunch of Southern delegates to deliver as he chose.

About the lobby of the Congress Hotel stood a group of newspaper correspondents waiting for something to turn up, when in strolled an elaborately dressed negro, extremely dark of complexion and important of bearing.

"I wonder who that is?" queried one of the correspondents.

"It's a Southern delegate," replied Benjamin Archibald Mattingly, of Washington, a Burton press agent. "Frank Hitchcock let his suit case fall, and that one rolled out."

A Thoroughbred

By Vingie E. Roe

Author of "The Shadow of Granite Ridge," Etc.

Square-built he was, and homely to the ignorant, but a great little dog to tie to: a prince of the blood royal. Burton, who was leaving for the North country, got him for a dollar—the first of his breed that ever went for anything less than three figures. Among the lumberjacks he has more than one chance to prove his mettle

NATURE marked him at the beginning. When he was two days old, Destiny hovered over him in the pointing cane of the smartly clad owner of the great kennels who was examining the latest litter of puppies.

"Peculiar spot on the left side of the head," he said, "a rare thing that among Airedales—such a decided off marking. Kill that one."

But Gaston, underkeeper, roving, big-hearted, lover of dogs, touched his cap and spoke.

"I'm leaving for the North, as you may know from Burton, sir," he said, "and if you will let me have him, I'd like to take the youngster. I'll pay you what I can afford."

The owner looked at him keenly.

"I don't like to let imperfect dogs go from my kennels," he said coldly.

"I'll change his surname," said the keeper, "and never tell his blood."

"Oh, all right. Pay Burton a dollar." The other laughed. "The first time one of that breed ever went for anything less than three figures."

So it was that, when the puppy was two months old, a lank, ragged little creature, with the most eager eyes in the world, he left the sunny slopes of southern California, properly crated and tagged, in an express car.

He shivered and whined and tried to kiss the hands of the trainmen through the slats of his crate, and watched unceasingly for the red-cheeked, square-shouldered young man in the ill-fitting suit, whose brown eyes were never without a smile.

Already the puppy was a one-man dog.

At Albany, Gaston took him from his bondage, and the two began to live in earnest.

Autumn was upon the coast country. Low, gray skies drifted unceasingly along the mountaintops, mist fell and stopped and fell again. Huge lakes of fog sailed in from the ocean, obscuring the beautiful land, already greening with the rain-time grass.

Gaston, whistling in the joy of him who loves the wild, bought him a bed, a Mackinaw coat, and a pair of spiked, knee-laced logger boots.

The blankets he made into a "turkey," which he slung on his back with a practiced hand, and, putting the puppy to heel, struck west into the great, wild timber lands that lie between the railroad and the sea.

For days they climbed into the dripping dusk of the Coast Range, among the towering pines, firs, and spruces.

They stopped of nights in this thicket or under that jutting rock, and Gaston made great, roaring fires from the abundance of resinous wood that choked the underways.

They were hard days for the puppy, sprawling over logs, toiling through the wet ferns, but Gaston kept a careful eye upon him, and when the way became too hard, or he showed signs of tiring, he took him up and let him ride

in the hollow between his great shoulders and the turkey.

But no matter how his small limbs ached with fatigue, the little chap did not whimper.

"Some good little dog, ain't you?" said the man delightedly. "No quitter, believe me."

Three weeks had gone by, three long, delightful weeks of idling in the austere, mysterious, mist-swept mountains, before the man and the puppy hit Daily's lumber camp, up at the edge of the Siletz, and asked for work.

"Ever b'en in the hills before?" asked big John Daily.

"Gimme a crosscut and I'll show you," laughed Gaston, "or let me tend hook ten minutes."

Daily took him up.

"You'll do," he said at the end of an hour, and the newcomers settled down.

Twenty men slept in the bunk house, twenty men of the roughest breed the west coast knows, travelers of the turkey and "hotfoot" brand, reckless, homeless, independent, as unholdable as the winds, content in this place or moving on, keenly critical of men and methods, a fighting, hardy type.

Gaston, soft of speech, and good-natured, moved in among them, threw his blankets in his bunk, and made himself at home.

The little dog, long-legged and thin, all ingratiating wiggles, moved in also.

With its first appearance, laughter rose like a tide.

"What in thunder do you call it?" asked a lumberjack wonderingly.

"Airedale," said Gaston briefly.

"Air—*how many?*"

"Dale."

Gaston looked steadily at the other. His brown eyes, so softly luminous and pleasant, became blank as blinded windows.

"Airedale," he said pointedly, "and a thoroughbred."

The lumberjack, looking into Gaston's eyes, laughed with another note and rolled a rough hand about the puppy's head.

But twenty men of the logging country take "guff" from no newcomer, either in glance or speech, and the rest surged forward to have a look at the "thoroughbred."

The puppy stood in the center of the floor, under the hanging coal-oil lamp, and, though he was lean far beyond the lank privilege of puppyhood, he bore his birth in every line of him.

His little body, straight and short, was black from the high, bony shoulder to the medium-chopped tail. His legs, as straight as the body, were a light tan to shoulder and hip. So were his breast and the under side of his throat—a lean, strong-muscled throat that fitted into a caressing hand with a peculiar charm. His ears were short and sharp, tipped forward to fall upon themselves in true terrier fashion. But it was his head that delighted Gaston, who knew dogs from the wolfhounds of Russia to the starving Rampurs of India—his head that gave promise of his future and which had changed his estate from a three-figure value to a bunk-house jest.

This head was pale tan, rough-haired to match his ragged coat, and it was square and heavy and smooth as a bullet, a perfect "stream-line" head, with the eyes flush with the skull. When one passed a hand along it from nose to ear, he was scarcely conscious that there was an eye there, so finely was it set and fitted. But those eyes were almost human, bright, eager, intelligent, quick, and bearing in their brown depths a light that was pure courage. Just above the left one a sharp black bar hung in the bright tan, like an exaggerated eyebrow. The rather large nose was black above black lips fringed with a fluff of whisker, and when the little fellow opened his mouth to yawn, the beholder marveled at its spread, the strength and structure of the jaw. Many a time had Gaston examined that jaw, the muscles behind it, and grinned to himself.

"Better not fool with you, little feller," he sometimes said to the puppy, "or I miss my guess."

But not one of the motley crowd in the bunk house lost in the Oregon mist

at the foot of the great hill where the donkey screamed and puffed at snaking the eight-foot-through logs down the trail, knew what these things meant, and they laughed and hooted at the square-built youngster for the homeliest canine alive.

"Square-built he is," said Gaston, "and homely to the ignorant. Those who don't know can't see."

"Meanin'?" said a river driver from up Vancouver way.

"The whole push!" said Gaston swiftly, sliding off his bunk and rising with an easy flex of muscle that showed his heavy-set body to be fit as a fiddle.

He looked around at every face in the smoke-thick room, stood a moment, and, as no one answered his challenge, dropped down again.

But in that moment, here and there among the twenty, dislike set in for him and for the little dog.

Gaston called the puppy Grip, from the suggestion of that powerful jaw, and when he rolled in his bunk that night he motioned the little chap up on the foot. It was a goodly jump for one of his size to tackle, for the beds were built high, because of the eternal dampness of the rough floors, but the puppy tried and tried again, reaching the edge, to slide and slip off, no matter how he clung and scratched with his little, black nails, shiny as polished ebony. Five times he all but made it, and five times he fell back to the floor.

"Too thoroughbred," grinned the Vancouver driver.

"Enough thoroughbred," said Gaston, from his covers.

The puppy sat on the floor, considering. At his master's voice, he whined and whimpered.

He just *had* to get up on that bunk, but he seemed to decide it could not be done that way.

He looked up at a man near by, wriggled all over ingratiatingly, as if asking help, saw the amused indifference in his face, and promptly ceased his wiggle.

He moved on his feet, got up, and sat down, and finally looked all around the room with his terrier's eyes.

Suddenly, quick as a flash, he darted down the room to the last bunk, beside which a tired rigging slinger sat humped over on his haunches, oiling his boots with bear's grease.

With a leap and a scramble the puppy landed on his shoulders, and went from there to the bunk.

Now, the bunks were built in a line, mere flat troughs, with nothing to separate them but a low board at foot and head.

Therefore he had a straight sweep down the line, and, in a jerk of his stubby tail, which he carried straight up in moments of triumph, he was tramping round contentedly at the foot of Gaston's blankets to make himself a fitting hollow.

With a sighing whine he curled down and was still.

"For the benefit of the ignorant," said Gaston, chuckling, "let me say that brains are an attribute of the thoroughbred."

Winter came down in the Coast Range.

It rained and brightened and rained again a dozen times a day. Great white veils of fog drifted along the mountains, dense, pearly, beautiful.

Blue sky broke through the gray clouds and disappeared again as by magic. The great hills echoed with the scream of the donkey, forever lifting its huge cables along the built trail that scarred the face of the mountain, and the staring monsters came creeping down along it from some plateau half a mile high, where the "yarder" handled the twenty-foot sections of logs. Daily's was a real logging camp, and it was in full blast.

For four months Gaston "tended hook," took his life in his hand many a time, and drew six dollars a day straight.

It was a great life, and he was happy as the hill streams leaping to the valleys. Also Grip, forever at his heels, was happy.

Gaston fed him much strong meat, which he wheedled from Ma Daily at

the cook shack, and the youngster had lengthened and heightened amazingly.

When he was seven months old, he was nearly full grown, heavy of bone, strong of structure, very large for his breed.

He was as cheery and good-natured as his master, but, like that master, he soon gave signs that he took no "guff."

That was evidenced one day when the big, black imp of a mongrel that belonged to the camp happened to see him with a more than usually delectable bone. Now, Gaston and the pup had been there two months when this took place, and Towser had never noticed the little one before.

However, this was a different matter; Towser had been off on a hunt, and was hungry, and the sound of Grip's young teeth on the gristly bone made his mouth suddenly run to water.

Therefore, without a by your leave, he walked up to the puppy, cuffed him aside with shoulder and head, and took the bone.

For a minute Grip was too astounded to protest.

Then, like a flash of summer lightning, his eyes flamed red and green, he opened his throat in a whining whimper, his lips quivered a second, and he shot into Towser like a whirlwind.

In ten seconds there was a fight on that brought the men tumbling in an avalanche from the bunk house, where they idled for ten minutes after dinner.

Gaston was at the head of the avalanche, and he got there first.

There was nothing to be seen but a ripping, tearing tangle of black and tan where the dog and the pup rolled and raged.

Of course, the little fellow had no more show with the full-grown dog than a snowball in—the fire—but nothing could make him believe it.

He fought like a thousand furies, and Gaston stepped about delightedly, watching that he didn't get too dirty a deal.

Towser thrashed him unmercifully, fairly wiped the earth with him, had him down and bleeding a dozen times and in a dozen places, but every time he loosed his grip a bit the puppy was up and tearing into him again.

Grip never gave up, never lessened his furious effort, never admitted defeat. In fact, he didn't know he was whipped at all. But Gaston, laughing like a boy, went in and took Towser out by the tail.

Grip followed, and tore his face in ribbons with his sharp teeth, and some one caught him by the loins. He reared and struggled to get at Towser until Gaston threw the big dog across the narrow, tidewater slough, and took Grip's bloody head in his hands.

"Some little dog!" he praised; "some good little dog!"

But Grip, wiggling a bit to show he understood, cast an angry eye at Towser, and, with his black-and-tan-fringed short tail sticking straight up like a flag, walked stiff-legged to where his bone reposed in a puddle.

After that he ate his bones in peace, for Towser couldn't understand him.

"Guess you're right about your thoroughbred," said Jennings, the lumberjack who had first asked about him that night of their arrival; "he's sure got sand."

"Sand?" said Gaston warmly. "Say, feller, that little chap's clean, soft-running sand all the way through—black sand that carries gold."

But there were others in the camp who called the young dog by an evil name, and badgered him when his master was not around. Grip took it all with a grain of salt, because he was naturally sweet-tempered, but sometimes his ears would come up in an odd manner, and he would stand still, regarding his torments with head outthrust, tail extended on a line with his back, and his bright eyes turned a trifle dull.

At such times they fell off a bit in their teasing, and let him alone.

"Ugly mutt of a dog," said one; "I'd hate to meet him in the dark, and have him mad at me."

"He's no thug," flashed Gaston, who had overheard; "there are rules of the game for him."

As the winter passed, young Grip fell

more and more into disfavor. He swung around among the men in a high indifference that worked against him, since most of them were accustomed to dogs that crept and cringed at sight of a "corked" boot, that evilest weapon of the brutal human. Once a roundhead from Seattle had raised a heavy foot and struck the pup in the ribs, a wicked, raking kick that ripped his hide beneath the pily undercoat which padded the black, pig-bristle saddle.

It had sent the young dog rolling under a table two yards away, but, without a grunt, he gathered himself and came out like a flash. He had to thread between two moving men to reach the roundhead, but he reached him, and, leaping up, caught him under the left arm in those jaws of which Gaston was so proud. When they beat him off, in the next howling minute, they found immediate cause for a doctor from the town three miles away on the bay, for Grip had slashed out four square inches of the man's flesh, and one of his ribs showed through.

The camp went into an uproar over that. Some of the men were all for killing the dog on the instant, but Jennings, who had seen it all from start to finish, shoved him behind him and stood his ground with fist and foot until Gaston came on the run.

They finally quelled the racket, and Jennings shook his fist in the roundhead's face.

"You'd oughta got a sight more!" he stormed; "that pup didn't do a thing to you, you big stiff, an' you give him a dirty corkin' on the sly!

"He never picked a fight outa you, but, by Jimminetty, he won't take no dirty deal like that! Nor I won't for him! An' if any of you want to kill him, come on. I'd just love to meet you!"

Gaston slapped a hand on Jennings' shoulder, and stood beside him.

"Yes, come on," he urged; "we'll both be pleased to meet you, gentlemen."

The roundhead went to the doctor, and he drew his time on the way, muttering. He didn't come back.

From that time on Grip went to coventry. He was down on the black books of the whole bunk house. His only friends were Gaston and Jennings and Ma Daily, that white-haired general of meals and men in their order, who fed the dog and stroked his long, classically formed head.

"Ef I know th' male creature, an' I think I do," she was wont to say to him, "you're a purty good specimen. You could give some o' these river hogs an' timberjacks cards an' spades about straight dealin' an' courage an' steadfastness. You got more human manhood right now that th' heft o' them."

And then, when spring was coming in the mountains, evidenced only by a lightening of the gray skies, a lessening of the rain, when Grip was full grown, an important arrival invaded Daily's camp.

Frazer, mainspring of the Dillingworth Lumber Company, suave, polite, keen-eyed, cold as an iceberg, came over the Coast Range on the dinky one-horse railroad, dragged up from Toledo through the mire of the winter-soaked road, and took up his abode in the historical south room of Ma Daily's cook shack.

"Though, land knows," Ma said ingeniously, " 'tain't steam-heated, an' th' only phonygrapht is the conch shell on th' stand."

But the camp capitulated to a man, for he brought with him the finest, manliest, most upstanding little gentleman of a six-year-old lad the hills had ever seen.

There was nothing like him in the country.

He wore black velvet and lace collars, for all the world like Little Lord Fauntleroy, and long, ash-colored curls hung on his shoulders.

He was slim and pale, a wisp of a boy, with great, smiling blue eyes and the manners of a diplomat.

"He isn't very strong, Mrs. Daily," said Frazer, his cold voice changing marvelously, "and I thought the hills might do him good."

And Ma Daily, with the first glance into the little man face, opened her old

arms and took him into her capacious heart, that held half the logging country and had room for more.

His name was Stanley, and he was politely eager to see everything at once.

It was near noon when they arrived, and the general unwrapped the boy and promptly took him into the great kitchen, where the steam and the savory odors and the drying gum clothes warred for first place, and she set him by the big range, with his little feet on the let-down oven door.

And here, while he asked endless questions in his piping voice, and delighted Ma with his pretty ways, young Grip, wandering by in quest of bones, found him.

The dog wagged in, and the boy turned to look at him, and the next minute they had adopted each other world-without-end. Grip fawned and grinned and wagged himself into a tangle, kissed the boy's hands and face and the long ash curls, which wound on his tongue to the pain of them both, and was so evidently abased with desire to curry favor that it would have been disgusting to those who knew his high-and-mighty independence.

And the boy reciprocated. He submitted to the somewhat dubious delight of the canine kisses, which were a trifle wet, since Grip had been playing with a stick at the edge of the tidewater slough, and hugged the sturdy neck, to the detriment of his lace collar.

"See, daddy!" he piped, when Frazer came out, "he's an Airedale, like Rockburton Orang, and I think he's a thoroughbred."

"Yes," said Frazer, with a quizzical smile; "I think so, too."

And he examined Grip while the loggers stormed in for the midday meal, a steaming mass of man flesh, sweaty from herculean labor, powerful, free, devil-may-care, holding their jobs, their reputations, and their lives on the flip of a coin.

Now, Frazer did not care to eat with them, but in the logging country social lines are wiped out with an amazing airiness, and Ma Daily set two extra plates, commanding the line on that side of the table to "shove down a piece."

From that day forth Grip had a new heaven and a new earth.

He attached himself to the little boy like his shadow. He loved the very ground beneath his feet, kissed his garments, and lay at night by the south-room door that hid him, for Ma Daily, knowing dogs and boys, permitted it. But if any think that this young dog forgot his master in his new love he is very far adrift. Never for one moment did Grip lose sight of the fact that he was a one-man dog. No matter where he and Stanley roved about the camp, nor on what fascinating business they were engaged, the stamp of the men on the cook-shack path was a signal to bring him racing for Gaston's touch on his head, his kindly word. After that he was free to go back to his interrupted affairs with the child.

Frazer was out in the hills from daylight to dark, for great deals were afoot, and he was paying an expert scaler from Portland eight dollars a day for his services.

Therefore there were many hours for a little boy to fill, though Ma kept a sharp eye upon him, and plied him with much heartsome handiwork in the shape of little sugar cakes with currants on top—a thing unheard of in his previous experience of malted milk, proteids, fats, et cetera, et cetera.

But as the whimsical, sun-and-mist-swept days went by, the child began to take on strength, the color came creeping shyly into his pale cheeks, and he bloomed like a fragile flower. He slept at night like a little log, dreaming of Grip and the long stretch of greening bank beside the tidewater slough.

But the men, watching the intimacy between the boy and the dog, began to drop offhand remarks where Frazer might hear them.

"He's a sly devil," said Smith, at the table's foot one night, "temper's hung on a trigger. Seen him flash out like powder onct, an' he tackles what's nearest."

"Bit his owner onct," said the Vancouver river hog, making slyly sure that

Gaston was not present, "an' he's th' savagest beast I ever saw when he gets them spells. Reg'lar fits."

Frazer, far up the table, pricked up his ears, and the seed was sown.

He watched Grip narrowly for three days, and finally decided that they were talking of some other dog.

And Stanley was beginning to live as a little boy should, for the first time in his short history. He threw sticks into the sluggish slough and doubled up with delighted laughter when Grip plunged in and brought them out. He ran and raced, unmindful of the wet, dug into holes that smelled of gophers to Grip, who sailed in and helped him till the earth flew in a cloud, and day by day he went a little farther afield.

They followed the dinky engine, trundling on its narrow-gauge track with its load of huge logs which landed at the lower rollway, where they went rolling into the slough, to drift with the tide to the bay, be made in the great, cigar-shaped rafts, and go out to sea at last.

They rode with Murphy in the tiny cab, both of them, since Stanley would not go without Grip. They became adventurers, with the illimitable country shelving into the heavens on either side, and the dark fastnesses of the big timber beckoning like the enchanted gardens of the Genii.

The soft winds lifted Stanley's ash curls, brought insidious whispers of romance, of fairies and goblins and princesses asleep in castles, and his little man heart swelled with daring.

He looked at the mountains, and longed to go up into them. The valley day by day became too narrow. He hung to Grip's short ear and ran to the hills' feet, adventuring. And then came the day when the great desire gripped him, as, sooner or later, it grips all strong souls, and he could no more have stayed in the valley than he could have flown.

The high peaks called him, the great wild land reached down and took him, and he went. Went with his blue eyes shining and his curls bobbing on his shoulder, with his young, strong-hearted friend plunging beside him, and the wilderness closed down behind him.

After all, he was but a little boy, for the first time loosed from the shelter of a wealth-burdened house, and he saw no danger anywhere.

And Grip, raised in the wilderness, was unconscious of wrong.

An older dog would have drawn the child back to camp by devious cunning methods, by circles and frequent sittings on its haunches, refusing to go on.

But Grip went up and on in joy, and they went toward the north, where there ran no roads, where one faint trail led toward the reservation of the Siletz, where the giant ferns towered above their heads and the vine maples grew thick as reeds.

It was a fairyland in very truth. The pale sunlight, drifting into the green depths, caught them in a magic net. Rotten logs broke in a damp, red powder under their scrambling feet. Squirrels chattered at them from the awful height of pines, whose first branches spread a hundred feet from earth. Little, green snakes wriggled away from them, snakes which Grip caught and shook into limp strings. And they went on and on, enchanted, looking for adventure around every turn of the shelving hills, behind every rock and tree and angle. They had left at noon, just as the men stormed into the hills, and Ma Daily, seeing the two trailing along with Murphy, gave them up with a clean conscience. But they had left Murphy at the upper rollway.

Therefore they had the long, golden afternoon, and they made the best of it. A little boy and an eager dog can go far afield in five hours, and so they did. It was not until the shadows—early shadows, for the mountains take the light full soon—came down about them that the child turned back, or thought he did. In reality, he went due east.

But, long before that, Grip had grown uneasy.

Time after time he circled and feinted toward the south, for *he* knew well where home lay, but Stanley would have none of it. He pulled and coaxed

and fretted at the dog, and Grip, his heart running to water at his idol's least impatience, wriggled and followed, though he looked over his shoulder time after time.

As they threaded a tangle of fern, it suddenly dawned on the little lad that it was night—and horror flooded him like a tide. He screamed and tried to run, and called on his daddy. And then the brave heart that was in him, for he was a true man-child, stopped him with a shaking small hand on Grip's head to look about for home.

But home was lost, indeed, and the fairy woods were all suddenly peopled with goblins and ogres, and dragons waited behind the rocks and pine boles.

He was filled with an anguish of fright, and his little legs trembled as he began to run. But he was weary from his grand quest, and he made small headway, and the sweat broke out on his little body. He climbed up along the face of a ridge thick strewn with bowlders, and he sobbed as he went. He clawed and clung desperately to the vines to help him go, and when he reached the top there was nothing beyond but fearsome shadows and a drop straight down, where the rocky spine cropped out for a full ten feet.

He leaned out to peer at the horrid dusk below, holding to a manzanita branch—and the manzanita branch, split from its parent tree by a hungry bear in quest of berries the preceding fall, let go.

The child went down like a plummet. The fear and the dark faded out. As he fell, young Grip snatched at him with the powerful jaws that had branded the Seattle roundhead, but they snapped on empty space. He yelped and teetered on the brink, then, like the child's shadow, he leaped after him.

Stanley lay on a shelving slant, with the wall of rock behind. His curls were spread fanwise under his head, and one small leg in its brave little boot with the tiny "corks" was doubled back, the white bone piercing the earth.

The smell of blood came, warm and wet, into Grip's nostrils, and he raised his head and sent into the silent hills a howl of pure anguish.

He dropped on his belly and kissed the little face, white like a moon in the dusk; he nudged and nuzzled the limp, little body, tried by every loving artifice to stir his idol awake.

But the night came down in earnest, the hill cold settled like a blanket, and he pressed his own warm body hard against the child, and fell to watching the near dusk with anxious eyes, nose on paws, a whining whimper gurgling from time to time in his throat.

And, through the dark and the silence, Destiny came prowling to prove this lean, young dog whose name at camp was bad. Up on a ridge a slim, shapely creature raised a sharp nose, and scented quarry. He sniffed and listened, sniffed again, threw up his throat, and sent a volley of yelps snapping into the stillness. Instantly he was answered, from the right and from a higher ridge. He started forward, trotting, and a silent shape fell in soon, while two others joined him a little later.

Altogether, the four, trotting swiftly, cut the night with their staccato chorus.

"Lord!" cried Frazer, far away to the south, where the entire camp, armed with guns and lanterns, was beginning to spread in a circling net. "Coyotes!"

"Needn't worry over coyotes none," said a saw filer grimly; "it's that slug-headed hound o' hell what's b'en a-follerin' him like his shadder. He's turned on th' kid an chewed him to bits in one o' his spells."

A hand of ice closed about the father's heart, his throat contracted.

"Spells?" he whispered.

"Yes—spells. That's a bad dog. Slashed the heart out o' a Seattle feller, almost, one time."

Frazer wet his lips, and his hands shook on the gun he carried.

"The first man to see that—that brute," he said hoarsely, "shoot him!"

But Gaston, climbing behind, forged up.

"Not till we've found the boy," he

said, in a fury; "for I'll kill the man that does."

Out of the night and the silence a message came to Grip. It narrowed his small, dark eyes, lifted the short, pig-bristle hackles along his back.

He raised his heavy head softly and slowly, and, cocking his terrier's ears, listened. And then he saw—saw pale eyes that gleamed from the laurel brush that clothed the slope. His young body set up a tremendous trembling, and he rose softly until he stood taut on his straight legs.

The pale lights that went by two and two drew in a little closer.

They were a cowardly bunch, but, working together, they had pulled down many a heavy doe, accounted for more than one wounded buck, harried the life out of several steers which accident or starvation had disabled.

Therefore, they knew how to proceed, and this was only a dog—one young dog that stood in the dark, with head outthrust above the broken meat by the rock wall.

They fidgeted, and the saliva ran from their laughing jaws at the smell of Stanley's blood. And presently that one which had called the pack from the upper ridge sidled so near that he could have snatched at the child's little hand. Grip did not move, save to lean a trifle forward.

He knew that he was to fight, and fight hard, and all his big-boned body was aching for the fray, but he trembled with fear lest, in the fracas, an enemy snatch at the boy.

So he waited. But coyotes are an abandoned breed, without restraint or dignity, and they could not wait as they should.

So, with a yelp and a rush, the leader swung in and leaped for the dog.

It was a flashing, cutting, tantalizing attack, without a close, and Grip was surprised when his jaws snapped shut on the empty air. He had not stirred from his tracks, and he waited again, scarcely breathing, his eyes fired red in the shadows. Again and again the gray beast leaped in, the others closing up, darting forward under his leap to snap at Grip below.

The young dog stood, snapping like a trap, trembling—and then, with a flash and a spring, he caught the coyote in mid-air. His great jaws shut on its throat, and he flung his head with all the weight of his body in a wringing, tearing shake. There was a gasp and a gurgle as he shot back to Stanley and nailed a long, gray head that was stretching toward him.

After that there were but three dim shapes that badgered him, while from the near dusk a dwindling gurgle told that his one clinch had been efficient.

But the joy of the fight was on, and the others grew bolder, rushing in, eluding him, darting out, snapping from this side and that.

Sometimes they rushed him all together, and in one such roaring meet he caught a flying foreleg in his teeth, and the bone cracked smartly.

He was cut and bleeding in a dozen places, for three against one were heavy odds, but never had he given up an inch of ground, never had he yielded to the aching desire to fling himself among them and fight it out to a roaring, howling finish. The brains in that long, square head told him with human cunning that if he did, two would engage him while the other tore at his idol, prone on the damp slope.

So, trembling, alert, courageous, holding himself like a veteran on the field of battle, he pitted both brain and brawn against them, and stood beside the boy. He felt like a conqueror, strong, invincible, with the cliff behind him and his enemies before. His heart was a citadel of strength, sending its cohorts along his bounding veins. Hatred was a-surge in him, but not fear. Never would he move from his tracks. He would kill them as they came—kill them all.

And he did kill them, one by one. Wasting no effort, guarding every side, he waited for the electric moment, and flung forward in that deadly rush to grip and wring another throat.

And far below he heard the shouts of men and the firing of guns that came up nearer as the fight roared on.

Gaston, climbing fast, was the first to stumble up the laurel-covered slope, with Frazer, gasping, but fired with unnatural strength, a scant rod from his heels. Gaston played a pocket flash light on the green thickets, and its white circle, traveling along the face of the little cliff, struck its picture, passed, and flashed back.

Gaston spoke the name of the Deity softly, and stopped. Frazer panted up beside him.

"Look!" said Gaston.

And, like a picture on a stage, that white circle held a tragic sight.

Sprawled at the cliff's foot, in childish grace, lay the little, black figure in its velvet and lace, its ash curls spread like a fan. In the foreground huddled two prone heaps of gray fur, while a third wriggled and gurgled, not yet finished. And, above them all, dominating, courageous, hackles a-bristle, head outthrust, and dripping blood, stood Grip, his short tail up like a flag, his small eyes shooting fire.

With an anguished cry, Frazer would have leaped forward, but Gaston held him back with an iron hand.

"Take it all in," he said grimly, "in justice to the dog—take it in."

And the father, his heart breaking with fear, did take it in.

"Coyotes!" he gasped. "And he—he stood them off!"

And then they went forward and lifted up the little lad, and Frazer wept like a woman the while he listened to the little heart that beat softly.

But Gaston knelt and looked into Grip's fighting eyes and struck a strong hand on his dripping head.

"You're a prince, young feller," he cried huskily. "A prince of the blood royal! They don't make 'em any better! Not any better in this world, brute *or* human, and that's God's truth."

Two days later Gaston and Jennings stood at the cook-shack door, bidding Ma Daily good-by. Their turkeys were on their shoulders, their worldly wealth in their Mackinaw pockets. The joy of the "hot foot" was in their blood. They were on their way, and glad of it. They had joined their luck—pardners.

And then Frazer came, bringing Grip from the south room, where a little boy, with his small leg in a cast, had cried as he told his friend farewell.

"I'll give you a thousand dollars for him—cash," he said simply.

But Gaston shook his head, smiling.

"Money can't buy his kind," he said; "they're only for sale at the price of love and faithfulness. I bought him with those long ago."

"Then," said the rich man, "take this, and buy him the finest collar you can find. Have it made."

And so it was that in Portland the pardners stopped long enough to deal with a silversmith, who made a linked collar of solid silver, with a broad name plate. This name plate was peculiar, inasmuch as it was slyly double. On the outside it bore bravely, in big letters, "Grip—A Thoroughbred," but on that inner surface, which clamped with a lock, there was, in fine English script, this screed

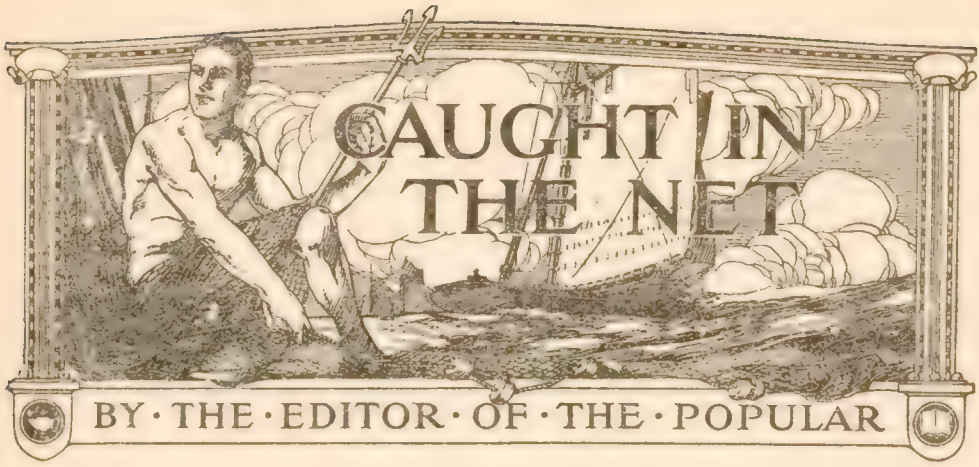
Clonmel Orang, by Ch. Dumbarton Orang, out of Briar Lass.

This collar they put on Grip's lean neck, locked it, and threw the key away.

Then Gaston and Jennings and the young dog struck away into the glorious green country, bound for somewhere "North."

All the world called to them—the good, wide world, with its far, free places, and they went like the free-lance hearts they were, went toward the greatest, freest land of all, the North.

Another story of the Thoroughbred will appear in the February 20th issue of ***POPULAR.***



TOOL MAKING

THE power of man over nature has come about mainly through tools and machinery. As Carlyle said: "He can use tools, can devise tools. With these the granite mountain melts into light dust before him; seas are his smooth highway, winds and fire his unwearying steeds. Nowhere do you find him without tools; without tools he is nothing; with tools he is all." Quite a panegyric, when you consider that the age of perfected tools and machinery is surprisingly young. It was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that steam power and improved tools revolutionized industry. Up to that time the principal parts of machinery were of wood, the fixings only being metal. Lathes were of the crude foot-power type, run by a treadle, and they were useless in the cutting of metals. For the most part, hammer, chisel, and file were the chief implements of the machinist, and made up his "kit." There were in use a few rude drilling and boring machines, but there were no planing machines either for wood or metal. Direct drive on a spindle was unknown. Hand forging was accomplished only through exacting and painful labor.

By the middle of the nineteenth century—1840-50—mechanical equipment had developed into what it is fundamentally to-day. Both England and America were the pioneers and promoters of this vast change. Such men as Maudslay, Nasmyth, and Eli Whitney created modern manufacture. England may be said to be the source of most of the general tools, and developed the boring machine, engine lathe, planer, shaper, the steam hammer, and standard taps and dies. America contributed the special machine tool, the drop hammer, automatic lathes; and, what was the master stroke of Yankee ingenuity and enterprise, America brought about the common commercial use of limit gauges, and developed the interchangeable system of manufacture. Moreover, some of the most important general tools, like the universal miller and the grinder, and the apron in the lathe, are of American origin.

The interchangeable system, credited to the Yankees, was really in use in England in the manufacture of ships' blocks prior to American exploitation, but the Britishers made little or no general use of it until their wide-awake transatlantic rivals demonstrated its enormous value. To those who may not know, this interchangeable system covers the production of complete machines or mech-

anisms, the corresponding parts of which are sufficiently alike, to be fitted into any of the given contrivances. Makers of firearms were the first to appreciate the scope of the idea, but manufacturers of sewing machines, typewriters, bicycles, et cetera, were quick to adopt it. France, by the way, was the pioneer of standardization in firearms, but it remained for America and England to put the idea into practical operation.

For a long time, France and Germany were content to import machine tools from Great Britain, but America began to manufacture them for herself, and New England was the center of the activity. With the innovations of the turret, the protean cam, and precision-guiding machinery, the leadership in machine-tool building passed from England to America. Indeed, by the middle of the nineteenth century, New England was not only making all the machinery we needed in this country, but she was exporting it to Great Britain—a poetic revenge for her repression of the industrial spirit in the Colonies during the years of her control. Even as late as 1785 the English Parliament endeavored to enact laws forbidding the emigration of mechanics and the exportation of tools and engines to America, but the effort was abortive. Men of the stamp of Samuel Slater and William Crompton came to the new country, and their genius found fertile soil, and flourished mightily. Slater, thoroughly familiar with the Arkwright machinery, established a textile manufactory at Pawtucket, after arduous trial and labor. Pawtucket as early as 1796 also had forges, mills, a cotton factory, a furnace for casting hollow ware, and machines for cutting nails and screws. Providence, too, was one of the earliest centers of the new mechanics.

A NEW SORT OF HISTORY

WHEN Homer smote his bloomin' lyre," the historian was fond of romance. The authors of the Nibelungen song, the gifted poets of the older Eddas wrote their histories as good stories with more regard for dramatic effect than anything else. With the exception of Thucydides, Tacitus, Cæsar, and a few other cultivated Greeks and Romans who were just as wise as any one is to-day, history remained the same till comparatively modern times, when it became a chronicle. Then for a time the historians were afflicted with snobbishness. They had no word at all to say for the people, but only described the fortunes—or misfortunes—of various royal families. Their books remind us of the invitation extended by Shakespeare's *Richard II.*, who says: "For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground, and tell sad stories of the deaths of kings."

About the beginning of the nineteenth century, people began to tire of this clammy and lugubrious entertainment. Both Hume and Macaulay showed us that the history of a whole race was much more important and interesting than the history of any set of individuals, however noble. Later on, Taine and the learned Buckle set a still newer fashion of thought. They gave the history of the race, but, according to them, however, the race was the product of its climate and environment, and its history the mechanical result therefrom. People like the Swiss, who live among mountains, are fond of freedom; people who breathe the languorous air of Italy are indolent and easily enslaved. And yet, in their reduction of the destinies and fate of man to a mathematical formula, they fail to explain why the Dutch, who live in a country as flat as nature can devise,

fought for liberty as desperately as the wildest of mountain goats, or why the Greeks, Romans, and Renaissance Italians, living in a climate considered enervating, have set free a burst of energy such as the world has not seen since.

To Madison Grant, in his book, "The Passing of the Great Race," we are indebted for a treasure of fresh knowledge and, what is more important, a new viewpoint. It is a short book, as such books go, but it holds that rarest of all things—a stimulus to original thought. Mr. Grant shows us the three great prehistoric races we are all descended from. He also helps us to understand that while the influence of environment is apparent, that of heredity is more subtle, potent, and enduring. He sends our imagination back across the dim centuries, and we see the swarming of the races who were to be our ancestors, the dark, long-skulled Mediterraneans, the round-skulled Alpines, and the blond, long-skulled Nordics. We see the development in the use of tools, from stone to bronze, from bronze to iron. We catch a glimpse now and then of some gifted, lost, and vanished race like the Cro-Magnons, whose wonderful and earliest of all pictures may still be seen in the immemorial caverns of the Dordogne.

To a country like this, which is, indeed, the melting pot of all the races, Mr. Grant's message is especially significant. Is the race to which we owe all our ideals and institutions actually dying out? Mr. Grant is an ethnologist, and helps us to identify racial types—and we have plenty in our cities to identify. He shows us that terms like Latin and Celtic, as applied to races, are absurd.

We see daily examples of the force of heredity in dogs, horses, fowl, and cattle. We are inclined to believe that Mr. Grant is well advised in his interesting attempt to apply the same principles to man himself.

THE PASSING OF JAMES

WE do not here propose to argue, pro and con, whether, as civilization advances, the upper strata of society demand servility of an exaggerated order from their employees or not.

However this may be, we do know that before the advent of the automobile the very acme of elegance, the pinnacle of luxury, was the saying by a person in real life, or on the stage, or in the popular novel: "Home, James, and don't spare the horses!"

And why was this the case? Because James was the most abject object of servility that our civilization knew. When, as a country lout, he went "into service," his schooling in humility began, and was carried on for years, until, at last, he was turned out a trained servant, even his face having the much-sought-after "aristocratic look."

Ah, what a character, an institution, James became, but what a sad spectacle, after all, he presented, perched high upon "the box," or standing, with perfectly folded robe, waiting in cold or storm or summer heat, incased in the most uncomfortable clothes that human ingenuity could devise, while my lady shopped, or saw the play, or lingered over the teacups before the fire.

Perhaps, besides making James' words and manner so subservient, he was made to sit or to stand and "take it" in the most unpleasant way possible to accentuate more strongly the luxury of his mistress.

But James, with his jerky little salute, and his "Very good, ma'am," has gone, and all because of the automobile; for it takes brains to run a car, and a

whole lot more brains to know when it is running right—and James had no brains, absolutely none! Nor had his progenitors—he would not have been allowed to dignify them as ancestors—for generations past.

No, it took brains to be a chauffeur, and brains balks at servitude, so "Very good, ma'am," became "Yes," or "All right," and Steve takes his little smoke, while the "boss' wife" shops, or sees the play, or lingers over the teacups. And if the weather is bad, you can see him sitting inside the limousine, reading a magazine or a paper. For Steve is a *chauffeur*, and not for one minute is he a *servant*—no, "not on your life, bo!"

So James of Fifth Avenue, the drama, and the novel is gone, and he owes—and we, also—his emancipation to the wonder of the age, the automobile, which has lightened the burdens of man and beast in a hundred ways.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE MEEK

THAT the meek shall inherit the earth we know from the Beatitudes, but there are few of us who realize that the declaration is already a reality. *Item*, a man is content to make soap, and in due time he owns a castle in Italy and marries his daughter to a duke. *Item*, another man puts up a tooth powder, and finds himself the lord of ten thousand acres, including forest and deer. *Item*, a third humble fellow is content to roll pills for the public stomach, and within a generation he is a power in government. *Item*, still another grinds flour until he persuades an army of workers to do it for him, and forthwith retires to the lot of potentate. And so on, ad infinitum. Ah, it is an excellent thing to be meek sometimes—particularly if you combine with it a commercial genius.

PEACE

IF war was not better than peace, there could be no war. Death has never frightened men off from any quest. They enter war to escape from a slave monotony, from continuing injustice, from inequality, from overwork and underpay, foul housing, industrial diseases. They receive proper food, warm clothing, correct conditions for efficiency, high honor for service, a great universal equality—at one stroke, war wins these things for which in peace half the world seeks in vain. Halfway thinkers have talked of a substitute for war, as if its virtues were merely danger, hardship, and adventure. Those gifts it confers. But it comes with a greater gift, that of equality for its practitioners. So if we wish to abolish war we must find a substitute that will take five million men in a nation, and treat them with self-respect, that will insure equal sacrifice, equal hours, nourishing food, and a favoring public opinion, which says: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Was any such treatment dealt out to factory hands in the East End of great cities?

If the same humanity was let loose into the daily life of peace, we should solve our labor problems. If Europe had been as friendly to the average worker as to the common soldier, we should already have arrived in the era of universal peace.

The Nigh Leader

By Buck Connor

Author of "If a Horse Could Talk," "One of the Color Guard," Etc.

Putting it up to the bay mare who was the nigh leader of the forty-horse team that stampeded in the great Circus Parade

TILTED back in the one swivel chair in his private office at the winter quarters, with a stump of a short black cigar gone cold in his fingers, the manager of the Barnum show was critically inspecting some sketches that had been submitted by his lithograph-printing house. The booking of all the acts for the coming season had been completed, and photographs of them had been turned over to the artists; these sketches were the composite designs. It remained for the little man with the gray beard—the "Governor," as every one around the show called him—to select his sizes and the quantity from the little "window stuff" up to the thirty-two-sheet stands.

One sketch yet remained to be passed on. It was the new parade lithograph—usually made in "thirty-twos"—and the smaller ones for the empty storeroom display. He was satisfied with the number of wagons and dens which the artist had incorporated in it—even the arrangement of the groups and colors showing the free street parade of the Greatest Show on Earth; but the band wagon, the very first wagon shown, which heretofore had boasted of ten beautiful grays as its team, was not in keeping with what followed it in the design; nor was it a strong enough attraction for the show since it had grown to a magnitude that required ninety cars for its transportation.

With pencil and paper, and his certain knowledge of the average street widths and lengths to guide the pencil, the Governor soon finished, and laid the paper down on his desk. Reaching for a match, he called through the door: "Charlie, send over to the ring barn for the boss hostler."

In a few minutes a knock on the door announced McDougal. He came, bowing himself in, with hat in hand.

"Hello, Mac," greeted the manager in a high, squeaky voice peculiar to the man. "How many bays have we got?"—as if he didn't know, even to the number of brass spots that decorated their harness!

"Sixty-five, Guvnur," replied the boss, seating himself in the chair he pulled up. "Sixty-five in the draft stock, 'n' thirty-two in the ring stock—all told."

"Who's the best driver on the lot now?" questioned the manager. "One who can always be relied upon?"

The boss hostler did not answer at once. He thought of Tennessee Slim, but Slim would booze up once in a while. And there was Becker; he was conceded to be the greatest eight-and-ten-horse driver among the "white tops." But he finally looked up and answered: "Dave Bertram comes nearest being that kind of a man. What'd yuh want 'im for, Guvnur, if it's any uh my business?"

"Well, Mac, I'm going to have you start in the morning on breaking me a feature band-wagon team. I want forty bays, and one man to drive them. Bertram is the man, and he will be featured with a special thirty-two sheet of three-color stuff."

The boss hostler reached to his hip pocket and got out his bandanna and

mopped his bald spot—the whole top of his head—and stared at the old showman.

"Now," began the manager, taking it for granted that the team was already selected and ready to hitch, save the one important animal. "Now," he repeated, "we must have the best leader you have on the lot. What one is that among the bays?"

"Kate," replied the boss instantly. "The bay mare in Rielly's eight, on the Liberty and Life tableau wagon. She's the best leader I ever knowed since I've been troopin'."

"All right. Get them together like this sketch—four abreast. And string 'em ten long. Front four with a jockey pole and Kate in the nigh lead. Let me see them at eight o'clock in the morning." He waved his hand in the manner that indicated the interview ended. As McDougal was pulling the door closed after him he added: "Pick five men as helpers on this team for the season to be under Bertram's orders only."

"Very well, sir."

That same afternoon McDougal and the men he had selected hurried out to the different farms where the horses were being wintered on contracts, and picked out those wanted to fill up the team.

They had to be matched up and paired off with respect to their shades and dispositions when hitched in teams. They also had to be kept together in one of the barns, so it required considerable shifting and adjusting. Their harness, bearing a tag with each horse's name on it, must be gotten down from the racks and gone over. The ten-horse lines, now stored away in a large sack in the harness room, must have four-abreast connections added to them. So the Governor did not grumble when at eight-thirty the next morning McDougal sent a helper over to announce the team ready, with Dave Bertram in the seat, and harnessed with a breast rigging to snap the lines to, thereby relieving his arms of the pulling weight of many pounds of leather attached to the swinging and tossing heads of the forty-horse band team.

"Great!" was all the old showman could say as he saw his latest dream a realization. "Great, Mac—it's a real eye-getter!" And he turned back to his office.

Dave Bertram and his helpers were kept quite busy breaking in this mammoth team. Kate, whom he had broken a couple of years before in a six team, was invaluable as a leader. He would often speak to her across the backs of the thirty-nine when about to take a corner. He felt great confidence in her. Didn't she know just what moment to start the swing on a six at the "runs," so as to place the front wheels on the runs themselves, ready for the pull-up team? Didn't she always leave the "horse top" first when they would line out for parade, the others never moving until she had started? And there she was, the principal horse in the greatest band team ever driven.

The green grass began to blanket the earth, and the birds began to sing. When the canvas, creamy white with newness, was spread over the big lot in Brooklyn, flaunting the brightly colored flags of all nations from the "quarter poles," and the red wagons with the rattle-rattle noises were being pulled here and there to the blaring of the "kid show" band at the first opening, Kate had learned her lesson. She had learned well just how much to give when she got that pull on either of the lines of the leading four-abreast team. When the day arrived that opened the season for the white tops the beautifully gold-leafed band wagon, drawn by a most wonderfully trained team of forty bays, headed the great free street parade of the Barnum show.

July 4th found the show in the town of Kensell, and it being a middle West date, with big crops and a holiday, they were sure to have a "turn-away" business.

The last section had rolled into town, and was unloaded and on the lot—a seven-block haul—by the time the

breakfast flag was hoisted on the cook tent.

"Line out the parade at ten o'clock, Tom; it's only about a four-mile drag all told. The chief of police will send you two mounted men to lead it," said the Governor, as the equestrian director came up to the white wagon for his instructions.

"The blacksmith gang and helpers had better go along to brake the hills, hadn't they?" asked the director.

"Yes, and get everybody on the job; we want a big turnout to-day," replied the manager, as he reached for a bunch of mail his secretary was handing him.

Had you been at the back end when the first notes of the call for parade were sounded, you would have seen a bay mare, with a red plume in her bridle and with red-and-white harness spotted in silver, slightly drop her head to clear the eaves of the horse tent as she preceded her mates to a canvas-covered wagon near the "connection."

"Haw, Kate!" spoke Dave Bertram in a kind but firm tone, and the animal swung to her left as she was bidden.

The helpers walked alongside, leading one or two of the "four" who were inclined to creep out of the line.

By the time the bandsmen, in their uniforms of royal hussars, arrived at the wagon, the canvas cover had been removed, and Bertram was just snapping the leaders' lines to the upper rings of his breast harness.

"They're lining up at the front, Dave," spoke one of the parade riders, as he hurried over to where Mooney's men were putting the trappings on the "bull herd," which means the elephants.

"Get up, Kate! Get together, boys!" shouted Bertram, and the mare answered the slight pull on the left line and pointed the team into the street where they were to form.

They paraded down one of the residence streets that was lined with people, and then crossed over to the orphans' home, which was out of their way; then swung back on to the main street at the top of a steep hill that dropped down into the heart of the town, where thousands waited their arrival.

At the top of the hill, the helper who rode beside Dave twisted the brake wheel as the forty-horse team came to a stop. The other men got the brake shoes under the wheels and signaled "all right." The nigh leader stepped out with her team at the word, and with body poles and lead bars dragging noisily over the fire-brick paving the band commenced to play and the people below to applaud, the children cheering.

Dave noticed a sudden gathering of speed just as one of the helpers rushed up alongside and shouted:

"Hold 'em, Dave; a brake shoe gave way!"

The man at the wheel strained every muscle to set the brake up a notch or two. Before they were halfway down the incline the wagon ran onto the rear teams. Bertram pulled on the lead lines, and the left one parted. That, combined with the shrieking bandsmen, excited the wheel horses, and they commenced running and crowding the lead teams.

Below, the crowd sensed that something had gone wrong. The street became filled with people pushing and crowding, trying to get anywhere to avoid that terrifying bunch of forty horses running straight down into the crowd. Women screamed and clung tighter to their children as panic seized them.

Faster and faster the horses ran, as an avalanche gathers speed down a mountain. The wheelers could scarcely hold their footing, let alone the weight of the big band wagon and its load of bedecked musicians.

Dave Bertram kept cool. Just at the bottom of the hill he saw a side street, empty save for a few men in white aprons and caps of kitchen employees. He waved them away with his left hand, and at the same time he shouted:

"Kate, *haw!* Whoa—*haw, Kate!*"

Kate's ears were laid flat on her head as she surged back time after time against her four mates.

"Whoa, haw, *Kate!*" Dave yelled again. The mare heard, and she answered by deliberately settling back and making the others of the front four drag her, and, dragging, she changed their direction a little.

"Haw, *Kate!*" Dave continued to shout, and was relieved to see her finally swing the first four toward the intersecting street; then the next four, and the next.

By the time the wagon had slid and skidded around the corner the helpers had rushed alongside the excited teams and had them by the bits, and were talking to them and quieting them down. When they had finally stopped and were once more the well-controlled forty-horse team bandsmen hastened up to the wagon.

"Dave, I want to thank you for saving my life," said the leader, brushing the dust off his uniform, where he had fallen from the top of the wagon.

"Thank me, hell!" snorted Dave Bertram grimly. "Just go up there and pat that bay mare that Harry's holding. She's the one who saved the whole outfit and a half of them kiddies at the bottom of the hill." And he showed them where the dragging half of the left line of the front four lay beneath the wagon.

Time does not stand still among circuses. The circus changes, and circus people change. So did Kate change as she grew older. Her healthy bay coat faded into long, bleached hair that hung scraggly over prominent hip bones and hogback withers; Kate had lost her shape and could no longer be hitched out on the nigh lead of showy bays. First she was put in a body team, and later found out that she was only a "wheeler." And just before a newly organized show purchased Kate with the surplus stock of the Barnum outfit, she was ignobly hauling the "gilly wagon."

Dave Bertram, like the mare he had broken to a leader, changed with the years. He no longer was a star driver among showmen, but by steady advances he had landed in the ranks of the most famous "Joeys"—as clowns are termed by the professional people. "Rube stuff" was Dave's line, and, being as good a rube as he had been a driver, his was a feature act. He signed a contract with a new show, and reported for the rehearsals at their winter quarters.

"Major Lillie will be here in a couple of days, Mr. Bertram," said the little fellow who was in charge. "But you won't have to wait until he comes to get your outfit together; we've already settled that matter. You are to have your pick of any of the draft stock."

"Fine and dandy!" commented the clown, as they started over to a building that housed the smaller vehicles of the show.

"Here is an old phaëton buggy with very high wheels and a sloping-down body that is deep, which we had considerable trouble in getting. It was handed down by the fellow's father, and he didn't care to part with it. But it is yours for the season. And about your harness—you can rustle that yourself, and O. K. the bill and bring it to me."

At the horse barn, the man in charge was showing Bertram all the horses as they stood in their stalls. At the farther end of the string were two stalls fitted with bars. He had looked at all the horses as he came to them, but did not find anything that seemed to harmonize with that antiquated phaëton. He was about to turn back when a horse pushed its head over the top bar and nickered in the slow, rumbling tone that quiet-mannered horses usually affect toward their masters. Bertram turned his head.

"Hello, there's another I didn't see!" he exclaimed as he walked toward the animal.

"Yes, she's the gilly-wagon mare," replied the barn man.

As he laid down the lower bar and crept under, the better to see the animal, the horse nosed him knowingly. He walked around and got a better view.

"Why, it's old Kate! My old nigh leader on the Barnum show! My old Kate!" he enthused as he patted the mare's neck. Kate laid her head over his arm, and begged for the lump of sugar he had always given her.

"Yes, Kate's her name," the man assented, as he laid down the top bar for Dave.

It was with the feeling that comes with meeting old friends from other days that Kate was led out into the driveway by her old master. He would choose no other for his work as a clown. And that is how Kate came to adopt—with a certain horse instinct for the humor of it, too—the profession of clown horse in one of the funniest rube acts the circus world has known.

"Are you *blind?* Can't you hear this whistle? Stop! Back up there till the traffic is open!" shouted the member of the Broadway squad at Thirty-ninth Street as Dave Bertram and wife—two "rubes," if ever the cop had seen any—came driving old Kate down the street out of the mass of waiting vehicles, straight across the traffic line, the old phaëton rattling placidly along, while the rubes craned up at the high buildings.

"Whoa!" yelled Dave, acting scared at the officer's sharp command.

The horse bolted so suddenly that she nearly lost her footing on the smooth asphalt pavement. She just missed the front end of a very expensive limousine as she passed between it and the traffic officer—so close between that the man had to jump off his square spot to escape being hit by the mare. She balked right then and there—even slid a few feet in doing so. The officer took hold of the bit and tried to lead her out of the mess of fast-congesting traffic, but after a while he gave it up.

"Get up!" shouted Dave, as Kate stood there bench-legged, with her head slightly turned to look back at her driver. "Get up, Kate!" repeated Dave, and slapped the lines down on her back with a loud crack.

"Get, up, Kate!" Bertram stood up and urged the animal, while his wife, Mary, got all excited and commenced crying and shouting: "Silas, you'll—we'll all be killed 'fore we know it!"

The officer was kept busy stepping this way and that to escape an uptown car or an automobile or a downtown street car or the horse and the old phaëton buggy that was circling the center of the intersection backward at a surprisingly fast pace.

An officer of the mounted squad came to his rescue; at least they both thought it would be a rescue. He grabbed the mare by the bit, and touched the horse he was riding with his heels. But Kate at that moment sat on her haunches and refused to move—to the amusement of the fast-gathering crowd.

In less time than it takes to tell it there were hundreds—yes, thousands of people crowding and pushing in their eagerness to get a look at the old farmer and his wife with their balky horse. Some sympathized with them and pitied them, even to the extent of warning the officers not to harm that old couple. But most of them got a lot of real amusement out of the situation and laughed until their sides ached.

A patrolman passing that way saw the mob, and stepped hastily to a phone and called for the reserves.

"Looks like a riot of some kind," he told the desk sergeant, and hurried out to work his way through the crowd to help his brother officers.

The people on the outer edge of the crowd shouted, "The reserves!" as a platoon of policemen, commanded by a police captain, came bustling through the crowd mid the clanging of patrol-wagon gongs. Some of them rushed into the crowd and started to moving them backward; others joined the traffic officer in trying to extricate the horse and buggy from between an uptown street car and two automobiles. They pulled and pushed, first an automobile and then the buggy—including the weight of the horse—and at last were rewarded by seeing the street car move slowly on its way.

The crossing was finally cleared by the officers in the reserves, and they

were trying to figure some means of getting the horse and rig out of there when Bertram started to thank them for their kindness. Old Kate immediately started to walk up. Dave said. "Whoa!" in a certain tone, and she took to a faster gait. Then Bertram shouted to the crowd: "I'll meet you all at the Two Bill Show in Madison Square Garden to-night!" and drove placidly away.

All the afternoon papers ran an extra; some were headed "Farmer's Horse Blockades Broadway"—"Police Turn in Riot Calls"—"Many Escape Death at Thirty-ninth Street," which accounts for the fabulous salary Uncle Silas and Aunt Lucy—with Kate a very necessary member of the act—drew as a street attraction for Pawnee Bill-Buffalo Bill shows.

The opening date of the Two Bills show was drawing nearer. The wagons had all been repaired and painted. The train had likewise been overhauled to pass M. C. B. inspection, and the crew at winter quarters were working on the seats and seat planks. The show's stock had arrived from the farms where they had wintered.

Old Kate had not wintered on the farms, where the draft stock had been sent, nor did she winter with the ring stock. She had lived on nice white oats, bran mashes, and hay instead of stock molasses, and had had the freedom of the fair grounds—the wintering quarters. Her stable door was always open for her, her mangers were always filled with hay, and clean bedding lay in her stall. Not a man there but would step out of his way to make comfort for old Kate.

Bertram and his wife were among the first to report at the winter quarters that season; it was not many miles to their home, a cozy farm along the Delaware.

"Hello, Shorty, how is old Kate?" Dave called out. "Bless her old hide, where is she?" Without waiting for an answer, he started off to look for his dumb pal of circus days.

He went first to the horse tents, but she was not there, the grooms told him. They could not remember having seen her since their arrival. He looked behind all the buildings of the fair grounds, and even went over and looked in all the race-horse stalls at the other side of the track. But old Kate was nowhere in sight. Dave called her a few names he would have thrashed another man for calling her, and gave up looking.

"Well, dear, I guess we'd better go over and look at the old buggy. Kate'll show up after a while," he told his wife when he came back to where she was visiting with some troupers.

When they got to the shed he handed his wife his overcoat, and went in and took hold of the shafts. The sun was getting low, and he could not see well, but he pulled. He could not move the old phaëton. He peered in to see what was blocking the wheels. He dropped the shafts and stared, his jaw dropping as a lump rose in his throat.

There between the front and rear wheels, sitting dog fashion on her haunches, with her head resting in the seat of her buggy, was Kate.

Why she had hunted it up when she felt the end coming close, who can say? Dave and his wife believed that she was lonesome and wanted to be near them when she died. They felt as though they had failed her at the last—when she needed them most. That hit Dave hard; Kate had never failed him, not even when thirty-nine other horses had gone mad with fright behind her. If Dave Bertram wept there beside her poor old carcass, who could blame him?

After a while they returned, red-eyed, to the office and gave in their two weeks' notice, which would close them before the show opened. They packed their trunks and went home, done with the show business forever.

In their small stable is an empty stall, all fixed up with Kate's old set of harness on its wall. Her old phaëton stands just outside. Above it is a sign in gold and black: "Kate's Place."

The Answer

A LAD with longing in his eyes, yet neither sad nor gay,
Came shyly to my hermitage and said he'd journeyed far
To find me; that one favor he would like to ask that day.
I said: "My boy, accept one chair, and here—take one cigar."

He blushed, and I was glad to see the goodly color run
From youthful throat to honest brow, a wholesome, hearty flush.
"I didn't think," he thus began, "that you cared much for fun,
Your poetry is often sad." Then *I* began to blush.

"The question—that's the thing," I said. He hesitated, smiled.
"Well, sir, I want to learn to write—I'm taking English now,
And reading Keats and Metchnikoff and Shaw and Oscar Wilde;
I thought—perhaps—that is—if you would only tell me *how*.

"When does real inspiration come? And do you work at night?
For instance, I have read your songs of wandering; they're great!
And did you ever shoot a man or mix up in a fight?
And have you been a cowboy, and rode bumpers on a freight?

"You write about Sonora girls and horses, dogs, and men
I'd like to meet; and Southern seas where coral atolls gleam;
Now, are they real? And have you sailed and tramped and starved, and when
Did you find time to do it all? To me it's like a dream.

"How should a writer end a song, and how should he begin?
Of course it's easy, once you get a start; of that I'm sure.
And should a hero only smile, or should he sometimes grin?
And should a villain always die, and heroines be pure?

"If you would tell me how it's done—the formula, you know,
The scheme, that subtle something that's behind the writer's art,
I'm certain all I need is time; I've read a lot, and so
I think I understand a bit—if I could get a start."

"You're going to get one now," I said, "but not the kind you mean.
My answer will be simple, and it comprehends the whole.
Forgive me if I seem abrupt; I'll put it straight and clean:
I couldn't tell you *how* to write to save my blessed soul.

"Poverty, Romance, Love, and War, Dis-ease and Durance Vile,
These stock conditions often help to fire, inspire, or break 'em,
The writer men; and all aside from how or why or style,
Money and skill may advertise, but only God can make 'em."

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS.

The Green Tree Mystery

By Roman Doubleday

Author of "The Hemlock Avenue Mystery," "The Terrace Inn Tragedy," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

Under a tree beside the main road of Greenville, is found the body of a dead man. In his notebook the deceased had scrawled that after killing John Kersey, he would commit suicide. The dead man is identified as the father of Evelyn Gould, whose closest friend is Patty Kersey, daughter of the rich John. No reason is known for the crime. Singularly enough, two men, at the time of the murder, disappear from Greenville. One of them is Dana Mackenzie, a young graduate physician, the son of the old doctor of the region. The other is Newton Payne, an eccentric and malevolent character, who had always endeavored to make life a burden to John Kersey. Not until there is rumor that the suicide, Gould, might not have killed Kersey, and that another hand might have written in the notebook, is suspicion directed at either Dana Mackenzie or Newton Payne, the missing men. Then the gossip centers about Dana, who is reported by the Kerseys' butler to have quarreled with the father of Patty, the night before the assassination. Dana sought the hand of Patty. Also, she has another suitor, Elijah Kent, a lawyer, who likewise quarreled with old John Kersey. Kent tries to advise and comfort the bereaved girl. But she determines on moves of her own, especially when her heartbroken friend, Evelyn Gould, leaves the town for an unknown destination. Patty finds out from his father where Dana has gone, and telegraphs him to come back at once that he may vindicate himself from the guilt fastening upon him. Then she sends for a private detective, and calls up Jerry Lawton, a New York counselor, who used to conduct some of her father's business affairs.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Two)

CHAPTER VIII.

JERRY LAWTON was the lawyer to whom Kersey had confided most of his business of late years. Kent had telegraphed him as a matter of courtesy upon Kersey's death, although personally there were few people for whom he entertained a more profound contempt. Lawton had wired back, "Shall I come up?" and Kent had answered, with a brevity which the telegraphic form excused, "Your presence not in the least necessary." It was, therefore, with mixed feelings that he received a telephone message from Patty soon after their conversation in regard to canceling past accounts.

"Ely, I want to tell you that I have wired for Mr. Jerry Lawton to come up and talk to me."

"Oh, have you?" Kent's voice sounded startled. "What's the idea?"

"Well, for one thing, I have to find out about—money matters, don't I? And—other things."

Kent was remorseful. A sense of delicacy had made him refrain from offering his own services in connection with her business affairs, but better that he should overstep the professional code than that she should place herself in Lawton's hands. He should have foreseen that she would need money and advice.

"Patty, can't I look after these things for you?" he urged. "You don't know anything about business, child."

"I know how to ask questions," protested Patty.

"Well, so long as you confine yourself to asking questions!" Kent con-

This novel began in the January 20th POPULAR.

ceded, with a laugh. "But don't do anything, Patty, will you? Don't sign any papers, or make any promises, without consulting me. If you'd rather not have me act for you, I can recommend some one trustworthy——"

"I'd rather have nobody in the world but you," said Patty, quite frankly. "But I can't really engage you for my lawyer, Ely, until after I have dismissed Mr. Lawton—can I?"

"Oh, if you are going to dismiss him, I shall breathe more easily! When is he coming?"

"This morning," Patty answered.

"I'll come over and see you after he has gone," Kent said.

He could not quite bring himself to the point of seeming to share with Lawton in the management of Patty's business. But still less, as he thought it over, could he tolerate the idea that Lawton should think that Patty was without friends, and that the manipulation of her financial affairs was to be left without question or supervision in his hands. He made it convenient, therefore, to be at the station when the morning train from New York deposited Jerry Lawton on Greenville's unpretentious platform. He nodded to Lawton civilly enough, though he did not extend his hand.

"Miss Kersey told me that you were coming up," he said, in explanation of his presence, "and I thought I'd like to have a word with you first."

"Yes?" Lawton had no misconception in his mind as to the regard in which Kent held him.

"Of course, I don't know in what condition Kersey left his affairs——"

"No, of course, you wouldn't," drawled Lawton, with subdued insolence in his careless manner.

"Did he leave a will?" Kent asked bluntly.

"Well, really, you know, Kent," said Lawton, "I can't discuss my client's affairs with an outsider."

Kent restrained himself by strenuous effort. "There is just one thing I want to say," he announced crustily. "Patty Kersey needs some one to look after her, and I am here to do it."

"Yes?" murmured Lawton, with that exasperating upward inflection of his. "Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all," answered Kent. "But that's enough. Just remember it, will you?" And he turned on his heel and stalked off.

Lawton chuckled to himself as he stepped into the Kersey automobile which was waiting, and he chuckled at intervals all the way up to Green Tree Hill. He knew Patty Kersey very slightly, and he was by no means as much the confidential man of affairs for John Kersey as he would like to be considered. But he determined swiftly that if he could by any means establish himself as Miss Kersey's lawyer, he would do so. It would be a bitter pill for Kent as well as a very good thing for himself. Judging Kent by himself, he attributed the former's obvious antagonism to professional jealousy. He was not unaware of the fact that he had displaced Kent with Kersey in certain matters years before. Naturally, Kent was jealous! Kersey's business had really amounted to very little, financially, for the "old man" had a penurious way of attending to things himself. But Miss Kersey's business might be a much more profitable affair, if properly managed. A young woman, who had just come into a large fortune, and who was quite ignorant—yes, decidedly it would be worth while making himself useful to Miss Patty Kersey! Just what was Kent's relation to her, he wondered. Kersey's attitude toward Kent he knew. Kent's attitude toward the girl he could guess. Miss Patty's he meant to learn. And, if he couldn't manage to pick something out of this for himself, he wouldn't deserve his luck!

Patty received the lawyer in her drawing-room with outward serenity but an inward quiver. This really was serious! Nothing but her headlong desire to begin liquidating her father's debts immediately would have induced her to act without consulting Kent. But here, she divined, Kent would not help her.

"Mr. Lawton, I asked you to come

up here because I want to know something about my father's business affairs," she began. She had rehearsed the speech to herself beforehand, and felt letter-perfect in it, so far as it went. "In the first place, how am I going to get money when I need it?"

Lawton explained to her briefly the formalities connected with the probating of an estate, and she listened attentively.

"Then I'll have to wait until the probate court says I may have my own money," she protested.

"Arrangements can be made by which a reasonable amount will be placed at your disposal currently without waiting for the final settlement of the estate," Mr. Lawton assured her. He was watching her closely.

"But if I want an unreasonable amount? A lot of money "

Lawton smiled, and Patty promptly decided that she didn't like him at all. He had no business to smile like that! But he answered directly enough: "An application for an unreasonable amount would probably be rejected by the court, my dear young lady."

"But if I must have it?" She resented his "dear young lady."

"How unreasonable do you propose to be?" he asked jocularly. All women were alike—mad for money.

Patty had thought out her requirements carefully, and she answered promptly: "I want ten thousand dollars, and I want it immediately, and I want it to do just exactly what I please with, and no questions asked by anybody."

Lawton seemed to regard this as an amusing and feminine suggestion rather than as the serious business proposition which Patty knew it to be. He threw back his head and laughed. "That's a fairly good sample of unreasonableness to begin with," he assured her. "What are you going to do with all that money?"

"I said no questions asked," said Patty briefly.

"Yes, but——"

"And no questions answered if they are asked," she added decisively.

"Well, you couldn't expect the court to just hand the money over to you in that way."

"Why not? Isn't it my money?"

"I don't know whether it is or not until your father's will has been examined. By the way, do you know if he left a will?"

"I don't know. How should I?"

"He never mentioned it, then?"

"No, he never told me anything about his affairs."

"He never consulted me about a will," said Lawton. "But we ought to look through his papers first of all and see if we can find one."

"But even if we find the will, it will take a long time, you say, before I can get the money? And I have a very special reason for wanting to use it at once. Isn't there some better way of managing than that?" She looked as though she doubted that he knew the law business very well.

Lawton flashed a quick look at her.

"It would not be possible to touch the invested funds, but sometimes there are ways of beating the law," he said, with a cynical smile. "If, for instance, you happen to have any unregistered bonds or other negotiable papers in the house, it might be possible, with a little care, to dispose of them, and get you the money."

"Oh, yes!" murmured Patty hopefully. "But how would I know whether there was anything of that sort in the house?"

"By looking through your father's papers," Lawton answered, with a smile.

"But I don't even know what a bond looks like," murmured Patty helplessly.

"If I might go over the papers with you," suggested Lawton, "I think I should recognize a bond at sight. I suggested bonds," he added, after a moment, "because I happen to know that your father held ten bonds of the Paint Pot Mining Company, and I believe that he had them with him up here. If we could find them——"

"But ten wouldn't be enough," protested Patty.

"The bonds are for a thousand dollars each," explained Lawton.

"Oh, of course!" She spoke a little haughtily, in order to nip in the bud any possible tendency on Mr. Lawton's part to smile at her.

But he didn't smile. He was looking at her with very observant consideration.

"Suppose we open the safe," he suggested.

And Patty, with a nervous feeling that her father might come in and catch her at his private papers and be very angry, led the way to the library.

Under her watchful eye, Lawton took out and examined the papers in Kersey's desk, one after another. They were mostly unimportant matters. There was nothing in the form of a will, nor were there any bonds. An examination of the drawers of his desk was equally fruitless.

"Nothing here," he said. "Evidently he must have put them into his safety-deposit box. Well, Miss Kersey, when you can conveniently come up to the city, we'll have to examine the papers there. Can you make an appointment now——"

"I think I shall have to talk things over with Mr. Kent," she said composedly.

Lawton was annoyed, and he was not the man to take this without showing his feelings. "Why did you send for me, then?" he asked bluntly.

"Because I wanted you to get that money for me. And you knew where father kept it—I thought." She was cool and a trifle reproachful.

"And you don't want to consult Mr. Kent about getting the ten thousand dollars?" he asked quickly.

Patty pressed her lips hard together, and shook her head.

"You evidently want that money very much!" he laughed.

"Of course I do! That's what I have been trying to make you understand from the beginning."

He dropped his eyelids like shutters.

"Well, Miss Kersey, the situation is like this: It would be difficult—practically impossible—for you to get that money out of hand without explaining what you want it for. But, as a matter of personal accommodation, perhaps I could get it for you."

"Well, then, why didn't you say so at the beginning?" remarked Patty ungratefully.

Lawton covered a laugh. "Why, at the beginning I was only thinking of how we could arrange to get the money out of your own property. Frankly, I see no way of doing that, but—you are of age, Miss Kersey?"

"Of course," she answered promptly. "I am twenty-four."

"Then I think I might take the responsibility of lending you the amount you want myself, on your unsecured note. You can pay me back when the estate is settled and the funds have been returned over to you by the court. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Why, yes, that sounds perfectly all right, and thank you very much, Mr. Lawton."

"It would be just as well for you not to mention this transaction, Miss Kersey, to any one—not to any one at all. I hope you understand that this is just between you and me, and that I'm doing it solely for your accommodation."

"It's very kind of you, Mr. Lawton," Patty repeated. "Of course, I understand."

Lawton drew up a simple promissory note and placed it before her for her signature. "You will notice," he said quietly, "that I have dated this a month back. It might not be exactly the thing for me to place this burden upon the estate while it is in process of being closed up, but if I furnished you this money a month ago, while your father was still alive, no question can ever be raised about it."

"Yes, I see," Patty answered, glad to display her grasp of practical affairs, and she signed the note where Lawton indicated.

"Now, how do you want the money?" he asked. This gave Patty occasion to consider. "You have an account at the local bank here, I suppose," Lawton suggested.

"Oh, yes, of course I have."

"Then, suppose I simply have the money placed to the credit of your account? Will that be satisfactory?"

"Yes, that will be perfectly all right," said Patty cheerfully. "How soon will you attend to that, Mr. Lawton?"

"As soon as I get back to the city. The money will be there for you tomorrow, and if I can be of any further service to you——"

"Oh, I'll call on you, Mr. Lawton, I certainly shall. You have been so kind and accommodating about this," Patty promised eagerly. "And—you won't mention this to Mr. Kent?"

"No," said Lawton earnestly. "I certainly shall not!"

"And I'll pay you just as soon as I can."

"I have no anxiety on that score, I assure you, Miss Kersey," he said, with a smile. "I am glad to have been able to accommodate you, and I hope that I may have further opportunities of being of service. In settling the estate, for instance——"

"Yes, I am going to talk that over with Mr. Kent as soon as possible," she said sweetly. "Now, may I give you a cup of tea before you go back to the station?"

And Lawton bit his lip as he realized that the business door had swung shut.

After he left her he was in two minds regarding his action. Had he bamboozled Miss Kersey, or had she bamboozled him? If his accommodation—at some personal risk and inconvenience—would bind her to him to the extent that she would give him her future business management, it was well worth while. If she had simply used him to get some money which she could not procure otherwise, and meant now to drop him for Kent, he had been a fool. At any rate, there was satisfaction in the thought that she had put one over Kent in this special case, and with his assistance. What in the world did she want ten thousand dollars for so urgently? Lawton's imagination had been trained by the class of legal cases with which he habitually dealt, and his guesses were not exactly complimentary to Miss Kersey.

And if he could have heard the instructions she gave her banker in Greenville regarding the disposal of that money the following day, it certainly would have sent his regard for her business acumen down to zero. For she was simply giving the money away with both hands.

"It's in payment of an old debt," she explained to the white-haired old banker who was taking her instructions in his private office. "Not exactly a legal debt, but a moral debt."

And the banker, who knew more about Miss Kersey's family affairs than she did herself, nodded quietly. He thought he understood.

"But it must be very, *very* confidential. Nobody must know anything about it—nobody—in—the—world."

"All banking business is confidential, Miss Kersey."

"Is it? I'm so glad! But how can we make quite sure that Miss Pomeroy gets the money?"

"We'll send the draft to our correspondent—to the bank we deal with—in Ashfield, and let that bank notify Miss Pomeroy. The bank will not even know your name, Miss Kersey. It will make its report to me."

"Yes. I see. That's perfectly all right. When can you do it?"

"At once, Miss Kersey."

"Oh, thank you! You don't know how much I appreciate your help and your—*understanding.*"

The banker smiled. People were not generally so grateful for help in giving away money.

But Patty went home in a glow of content. She had exactly the same sort of pitiful and vindictive joy in her heart that she had had when, as a little girl, she viciously erased the mistakes which had been glaring at the whole world of the schoolroom from its blackboard of publicity.

"*That's* done for," she thought to herself.

But Patty's impulsive and generous act was to have effects she did not contemplate.

CHAPTER IX.

The train from the west was carrying three persons to Greenville, though no one of them knew yet that this was the destination of the others. One was an apple-faced old lady whose innocent eagerness in human intercourse had given her a speaking acquaintance with all the passengers who had came through from Chicago. The second was a young man so strikingly handsome in a Byronic fashion that all eyes followed him, some with ready adoration and some with pretended scorn, while he, on the other hand, was so wrapped about and swathed in melancholy that he heeded neither the admiration nor the sneer. The third was Evan Baring.

To look at Evan Baring, you might, perhaps, have guessed him to be an undergraduate at some inland State university, but his youthful appearance and carefree air were really a part of his stock in trade. And his trade was that of a detective. Though he was older than he looked, he was not very old, even at that; yet he had conducted more than one important investigation into mysterious crimes where the evidence had been too fine to be caught by the rough-and-ready police sieve, and he had a reputation among those who knew which many an older investigator would have envied.

He had taken this train in Chicago the day before, and by now was pleasantly acquainted with most of the passengers.

"So you're going East to visit a niece you haven't seen for years, Mrs. Appleby?" he said, dropping into the seat beside the old lady whose face fitted her name. "How do you suppose you will know her when you see her?"

"Oh, I s'pose she'll be looking out for me," said Mrs. Appleby comfortably. "'Tisn't likely there'll be many old ladies traveling all alone by themselves that'll be getting off at a little place like Greenville."

"Oh, Greenville!" echoed Baring absently. His eyes had been fixed without thought on the Byronic young man just ahead, and he had distinctly seen the young man's head jerk up into a listening attitude. "What sort of a place is Greenville?"

"Oh, near's I can make out, 'tisn't much of a place, even if they do have terrible goings-on there. Say, I'm going to tell you all about it. My brother-in-law told me not to talk to anybody on the train, because they would most likely be confidence men or gamblers, but I guess I know you're no confidence man, and, anyhow, I wouldn't gamble if you asked me to, and it's hard to go on talking all day and stepping around everything important as though it was snakes in the grass. My niece is Patty Kersey. Likely you read in the paper about how her father was murdered in Greenville."

"Oh, yes, I did see something about it," Baring conceded. His eyes were too busy watching the very attractive young man in front to betray his own interest in this development. "Sad thing for your niece, wasn't it?"

"Of course it was. But, judging from the letter she wrote me, I should think she would take it in the proper way. She sent for me the first thing. Her mother was my sister, you see, and she died when Patty was a baby. Then for four years I lived there and took care of Patty. She was five years old when I married and moved West, and had to leave her. I'd have done better if I'd stayed, likely, for my husband died and I've been living with his brother's family since."

"What sort of a man was John Kersey?" Baring asked. He was wondering what he had done to deserve this good fortune at the hands of fate.

"Well, he was no worse than most men. Most men have a kink somewhere, if you come to know them. John Kersey was money mad, but he never came home drunk, and he wasn't mean to his womenfolks." Her bright little eyes twinkled knowingly.

"Most men are money mad, down at bottom," said Baring sententiously. His eyes were still on the Byronic young man who was so interested in the conversation though he firmly re-

frained from looking around. "Some men would even commit murder for money, if they weren't afraid of being caught." If he had staked anything on that remark, he drew blank. The young man in front did not move.

"It seems that this time it was revenge, not money," said Mrs. Appleby. "Anyway, Patty wrote me and asked me to come and live with her for the summer, till we could see how we got along together. Of course, I may be jumping out of the frying pan into the fire, but it don't *seem* as though a niece that remembered your name and address for all these years without ever seeing you *could* be as trying to live with as a brother-in-law that grudged you your meals."

The attention of the young man in front had perceptibly relaxed, from which Baring drew the induction that his interest in human nature was not as keen as his interest in Greenville.

"I feel sure you will find her charming and kind," he said amiably. Then he added, with intention: "Maybe I'll see you in Greenville. I am going to be there for a while myself."

No question but that this caught the attention of the listener in front!

"Well, now, if that isn't a coincidence!" cried the little old lady with great eagerness. "Why, I'm glad I got to know you. I'll know that I've got one friend in the place, anyway. What's your business there?"

"I'm a book agent," said Evan Baring. He had selected his nominal profession with care. As a book agent he could go anywhere and talk to anybody without arousing curiosity. And then, for the benefit of the young man in front, he began to elaborate on the idea. "I take orders for all sorts of books—cheap books and expensive books, schoolbooks and novels, sets and editions de luxe with extra illustrations worth thousands of dollars. Maybe I'll sell some books to Miss Kersey."

The Byronic young man frowned and ran his finger around inside of his collar, as though it had suddenly choked him. Evan Baring laughed inwardly and continued to probe.

"She'll have stacks of money now. No reason why I should not separate her from some of it before some young fortune hunter with a handsome profile and no scruples gets on the trail and gathers it all into his own hands."

It was perfectly evident to a student of physiognomy that the jaws of the young man in front were clenched viciously even though his face was turned three-fourths away. But, if he disapproved of Evan Baring's cold-blooded and mercenary proposition, he was not alone. Mrs. Appleby also looked shocked disapproval at her companion.

"I don't think that sounds very nice," she said, trying to draw her amiable face into lines of severity.

Baring laughed. "If Miss Kersey doesn't run up against anybody more dangerous than me, she's safe," he said reassuringly. "But she's mighty lucky to have you come to look after her—I can see that. Now, let me get your things together for you—this is Greenville we are coming to."

When they reached the station he put her into the care of the porter and waited till he saw her safely bestowed in a car which had obviously been sent for her, but from the tail of his eye he had been keeping watch of the young man of the Byronic countenance, who, as Baring had expected, had also stopped off at Greenville. He carried no bag of any sort—a fact which struck Evan as odd, since he had clearly been traveling the entire day. And though he walked down the board walk toward the village with an air of familiar acquaintance, he spoke to no one. And no one spoke to him, though all eyes were turned upon him—to the complete neglect of the stranger who was ostensibly waiting for his trunk to be discharged. Some of the glances that followed the other young men were merely curious or amused, but the station agent put admiration into his comment.

"Well, he's got his nerve with him, all right," he remarked to the world in general.

"Who is that man?" Baring asked.

The agent glanced at him for the first time and proceeded to jerk the trunk to a truck.

"We were fellow passengers," said Baring, "but I didn't get his name." And he looked expectant.

"Huh!" said the station agent. "That's Dana Mackenzie."

CHAPTER X.

Dana Mackenzie walked without knocking into the house which was both home and office for his father and himself, and went directly to the office. His father was at his desk, looking at some papers. He was so profoundly absorbed in his occupation that he did not hear Dana's step on the rug behind him, and when Dana put a hand on his shoulder, Doctor Mackenzie started so violently that his papers fell to the floor. He stared at Dana with something like fright in his eyes.

"Excuse me, I didn't mean to startle you," said Dana, with light apology. He stooped for the papers, but Doctor Mackenzie intercepted him. He thrust the papers carelessly into a drawer, and, though he still looked white and startled, he had recovered his composure.

"So you're back?" he said.

"Yes."

"I thought you said you were going on, in your not very full telegraphic message?"

Dana shrugged his shoulders and walked over to the mantelpiece for a match. His father's hectoring manner always shut off any impulse on his part toward confidence.

"I changed my mind," he said shortly. He lit a cigarette, tossed the match into the empty grate, and watched it burn out.

"You received the money I wired you?" his father asked, after a pause.

"Yes. Thank you." Dana turned his back to the fireplace and faced his father across the room. "Did you give my address to—Miss Kersey?"

"No. That is—I hadn't realized I did, but now that you speak of it, I may have done so, without intention. She came to see me about you." He hesitated, and then added dryly: "Did she telegraph you to return?"

"Yes."

"And that is why you came back?"

"Yes."

Doctor Mackenzie shrugged his shoulders, but Dana gave no heed. He spoke with an obvious effort at self-control.

"She gave me to understand that it was necessary for me to come home in order to meet and repudiate some slander that was seriously affecting my reputation. She was urgent, but not explicit. I wish you would fill in the blanks for me, father."

"You have no idea, then, what she meant?" Doctor Mackenzie asked slowly.

Dana hesitated a moment. "I have an idea," he said shortly. "But I should like to know—all of it."

Doctor Mackenzie did not answer immediately. He turned the key in the drawer, which he had closed, and dropped it into his pocket, all with an air of abstraction. At last he pushed back his chair and turned toward his son, although he kept his eyes on the floor.

"The night you left here so unceremoniously John Kersey was killed in his library. You know that, don't you?"

"I saw the papers."

"It seems that you had a violent scene with him in the evening. Also that you returned to the house after everybody was abed—the butler, Roberts, is authority for the statement that you were seen running down the steps from the library, some time in the night."

"Would he swear it was I?" Dana sneered.

"I don't know. The matter has not come to a question of sworn testimony. But he has undoubtedly talked."

"Judging by the looks I encountered this afternoon, I gather that he has," Dana said, with some bitterness. His cigarette had died in his fingers. "But I understood that the man who committed suicide confessed to the murder. I don't see why that didn't settle it."

Doctor Mackenzie looked up swiftly, and then dropped his eyes. "It was so obvious that the confession could have been forged after Gould was dead that I felt bound to point this possibility out to Orton. He paid no attention to it, but the idea seems to have been taken up by others."

Dana stared without speaking. He was evidently turning things over in his mind. Doctor Mackenzie went on hurriedly: "I think it a mistake for you to come back, Dana—a mistake to pay any attention to the matter. It would die of itself if left alone. Orton has taken his stand officially as accepting Gould's confession——" His nervous face twitched in spite of his effort at self-control, and Dana suddenly remembered Evelyn Gould.

"Where is Miss Gould?" he asked abruptly.

"I don't know. She has gone away. Our engagement is off. You may as well know that."

"She broke it? Because of this?"

"Yes."

Dana walked restlessly over to the window and stood looking out into the neglected garden, where weeds and flowers were entangled, and grass grew in the walks.

"It seems to be a precious mess all around," he said suddenly.

Doctor Mackenzie made a violent gesture. "John Kersey always brought trouble. He has been the evil genius of my life."

"Of your life!" scoffed Dana. "It seems to me that I am the one the hoodoo has picked out in this case."

"You think so," his father said shortly. But he apparently decided not to explain further, for, after a moment's silence, he went on more calmly: "If you will take a word of advice, Dana, you will have nothing further to do with—the Kersey family."

It was not a fortunate word, for advice was the last thing that Dana Mackenzie ever cared to take. He flushed with resentment, or some other feeling.

"That's my affair," he said curtly. And he ended the conversation by walking out of the room.

CHAPTER XI.

Evan Baring found a lodging place for himself at the comfortable country inn which named itself the Greenville Hotel. He boldly announced himself as a book agent, and by a series of skillful questions he succeeded in making the proprietor, Jensen, give him the name of Miss Kersey as a probable book buyer. Evan played the game even when no one was looking. Having thus provided an obvious and reasonable excuse for an immediate call at Green Tree Hill, he made his way up the hill that same evening and sent in his card to Miss Kersey. She directed Roberts to show him to the south porch and went down there to meet him.

"Mr. Baring?" she said inquiringly. And then involuntarily: "Oh, my goodness, how young you are!"

"I—I'm sorry," stammered Baring, somewhat taken aback.

"Oh, I don't suppose it matters. At least, it wouldn't ordinarily. But if you are going to——"

"To sell books," he interrupted, with a warning gesture. "I have come up here, Miss Kersey, to take any orders for books that you may care to give."

"Oh, no one can overhear us here," said Patty, with quick understanding. She seated herself and motioned him to a chair. "That's why I am receiving you out here on the porch. It is the safest place. And we have to have some place where we can talk without being afraid. I was *so* relieved when Clio Ellerson wrote me that you were coming—though I did hope that you were going to be old enough to be a counsel and a comfort to me!" She looked at him again regretfully.

"Well, Miss Kersey, please keep on hoping as long as possible! Perhaps I may justify your confidence in the end. But Miss Ellerson could not tell me very much about what you wanted me to do. You will have to give me my instructions pretty fully." Baring was thinking of her, just as Patty had about him, that she was almost too young to be responsible. But he soon

found that under her impulsive manner she had a pretty clear idea of what she meant.

"Have you read about what happened here?" she asked directly.

"Yes. Everything I could find in the papers."

"Then you know all that anybody knows. Really *knows,* you understand. But if people talked only about what they really know, the world would be covered with great patches of silence, with only here and there a tree or a bush or a patch of live knowledge growing up in a gray desert."

"At any rate, it would be a different world from the one we are actually living in," laughed Baring understandingly.

"That's it exactly. And since we aren't living in that kind of a world, people make a lot of trouble by talking about things they don't know anything about, just for excitement."

"For instance——"

"Well, of course, you know what I have in mind. The village people have tried to make a mystery out of my father's death, and it has involved my friends. They are saying among themselves, here, there, and everywhere, that the note found in Mr. Gould's notebook was written by some one else, and they have fixed on Dana Mackenzie as the one who must have done it. Now, I'd be very glad, Mr. Baring, if you could show that Mr. Gould didn't write that message, because Evelyn Gould is a friend of mine, and it has about ruined her life to have this happen. She has broken her engagement with Doctor Mackenzie—that's Dana's father—and has gone away, no one knows where. Of course, if that confession was the truth, that settles matters. But I should like very much to know whether you think it is true, after you have studied everything."

"I see. You want me to run this gossip about Dana Mackenzie down, and prove, if possible, that he is the man, instead of the father of your friend," said Evan, trying to steer a straight course through the rapids of Miss Kersey's talk. He was not prepared for the vigor with which she repudiated the idea.

"Oh, my goodness, no! I couldn't bear anything like that!" She looked at him apprehensively, as though suddenly doubtful of the wisdom of invoking his dangerous aid. "Why, Dana is my friend! And he is just beginning his career as a doctor, and it is perfectly awful for him to have to start with such a handicap. And it is a handicap, even if his own father doesn't seem to realize it. I want you to prove in black and white that Dana had nothing in the world to do with it, and that they are wicked, low-minded people to think so for a moment, and that the very least they can do to make amends is to give him lots of business and make him famous!"

"Oh! I thought at first it was Mr. Gould's reputation you wanted rehabilitated," said Baring. He spoke with the calm dignity which he was cultivating strenuously, but inside of the safe recesses of his own mind he was saying: "Gee, how the dickens is a fellow to know what you *are* after!"

"Well, that, too, of course," said Patty serenely. "I told you that at the beginning There isn't the slightest reason for believing Mr. Gould had any grudge against my father. Evelyn says she never heard that they had anything to do with each other."

"But the police authorities have accepted the confession he left as genuine, haven't they?" Baring was thankful that he had studied the newspaper reports carefully. That gave him a stable foundation from which to view Miss Kersey's somewhat surprising flights.

"Oh, yes—they have accepted it," she said scornfully. "That is, Mr. Orton did. But he is only the postmaster. What could you expect of a postmaster?"

"But—I don't understand. How did the postmaster come into the affair?" asked Baring, in bewilderment.

"Oh, he's the coroner, or something like that, as well as postmaster. They don't have work enough to keep separate men busy, I suppose, so they dou-

ble up. At any rate, Ely said that Mr. Orton had closed the matter up, and he seemed pleased about it. Ely is so very wise that it is quite easy for me to disagree with him sometimes! I just have to be natural, and our opinions take us so far apart that it is quite an exciting adventure to get back to him again!"

"Who is Ely?" asked Baring. Mentally he saw himself in the gesture of clutching his hair with both hands, though no one would have guessed it to look at him.

"Oh, Ely is Mr. Elijah Kent, but you simply can't be intimate with an awful name like Elijah, so I call him Ely, like Ely Cathedral, you know. He gives you something the same feeling that a cathedral does, he is so big and dome-like and roomy, though I don't suppose you understand what I mean. But Elijah does very well for a lawyer, and he is quite a famous lawyer, and is going to be a judge, so it's all right. About his being called Elijah, I mean. And he is our nearest neighbor and my very most intimate friend."

"Thank you. That places him very well. And Mr. Kent, being both a friend of yours and a trained lawyer, thinks that the decision of the coroner to accept the Gould writing as genuine was the correct thing to do?" Baring asked significantly. To himself he was muttering: "Lord, what sort of a fool's errand is this that I have come on!"

Patty evidently caught his unspoken thought quite as clearly as the one he put into words, for she looked at him dubiously.

"Now, if you are going to get discouraged right at the beginning, Mr. Baring, and think there is nothing in this but foolishness——"

"Good Lord, no, Miss Kersey! But, really, you know, I haven't very much to go on, yet. I want to understand all that you have in your mind. Now, in the first place, who first cast doubt on the genuineness of the Gould confession? Do you know?"

"That was Doctor Mackenzie. He said this man had been to consult him the day before, and that he was dying, and he didn't believe he would have felt like going out from that interview to kill anybody. And I don't, either. It doesn't stand to reason!" she added earnestly.

Baring checked a smile. What had Miss Kersey to do with Reason, or Reason with Miss Kersey? But, at the same time, the tangle of the situation she indicated caught his interest.

"Then if Doctor Mackenzie's interest in Miss Gould had not led him to challenge that written confession, his own son would have escaped suspicion! Dramatic situation, that. And hard on the father, isn't it?"

Patty nodded. "You'd think so, wouldn't you? But he doesn't seem to take Dana's part in it very seriously. He shrugs his shoulders and says Dana needn't come back to Greenville, and that's all he cares. But Dana has to come back to Greenville."

"He has already come, Miss Kersey. He was on the train that brought me." He watched her guardedly, to see what personal significance this news might carry. But she responded with a frank satisfaction that hinted at no hidden sentiment.

"Oh, I *am* glad! I hoped he would! Good old Dana! Wouldn't it have been a mistake for him to go off and leave people thinking—that?" She appealed to him against Dana's father and the universe.

"Yes, I see your point of view. Can you tell me what started people to thinking—that? Why did any one suspect him?"

"Well, I am afraid it started from Roberts—you know Roberts—he took your card. Well, Roberts is a good butler, and he would do anything in the world for me *except* give up a point when he has made up his mind. And Roberts took it into his head that Dana was in it, and he has talked. I know he has, in spite of all that I could say. You see, he is so pleased with himself for having made what he thinks was a discovery that he simply can't keep it to himself."

"And what was the discovery?"

"Why, he saw Dana running away

from the house toward the road, some time in the middle of the night. If it had been any other night, it would have meant nothing, of course. Dana might be taking exercise, or just running because he liked it. But because of the quarrel the evening before——"

"Quarrel? With your father?" This was news.

"Why, yes, I suppose you might call it a quarrel, though really it was all on father's side. All the loud talking, I mean. But that's what Roberts heard, of course."

"Did any one else hear it?"

"Oh, very likely the upper hall was full of servants. When father really got excited and talked loud, the servants would listen, you know." She wrinkled up her forehead in deprecation.

"I don't suppose you know what the quarrel was about?" he asked, making a mental note of Roberts.

"Oh, yes, I do. I heard the whole thing," said Patty. Her flushed face belied her effort at composure. "It was about me."

"Oh! This is interesting."

"It was rather awful. But I'd better tell you. That evening Dana came to call. We were sitting here, talking, when Mr. Kent came over. Ely and Dana are the best of friends, you understand. But that evening Ely seemed a little odd, I thought. Very quiet, and grim underneath, as though he were thinking things that were not very pleasant, though he was trying to be entertaining on the surface. After a while he went in to speak to father in the library, and he didn't come back. I think he went off home through the library door—he often comes and goes that way, because it is nearest. Then, about ten o'clock, father came out on the porch behind me, and he said, very pointedly, 'Come inside, young man, I want to speak to you.' And Dana went with him into the library, and pretty soon I couldn't help hearing—words! I heard father tell Dana that he didn't want him ever to come to the house again."

"Do you recall his words?"

"Father said, 'Perhaps you are thinking of marrying my girl,' and Dana said, 'Perhaps I am.' Of course, he would have to say something like that for his own self-respect. But father hated the idea of my marrying any one, and most especially Dana Mackenzie, because he didn't like Doctor Mackenzie. And he said, 'You will never marry her while I am alive—mark that!' Then I ran upstairs, because I couldn't stand it any longer. But I know that Roberts heard him, and you see what good material he would have for a story afterward. And, more especially, as he saw Dana outside of the house, late that night, running toward the road. And most especially of all Dana seems to have really run away that night, without letting even his father know where he had gone."

"And is that the extent of the evidence against Dana Mackenzie?" Baring asked, with interest, when Patty paused.

"That is the foundation. I have no doubt there have been additions to it. Why? Do you think it not worth paying attention to?"

"I have known persons to be arrested and put on trial—yes, and convicted—on less evidence. But the fact that he has not been arrested of course puts his case on a different basis. I can see that gossip of that sort might be very annoying——"

"More than annoying, if you are a young physician, just beginning practice," she interrupted.

"Yes, of course. But the whole thing is—cobwebby." But an intent look had come into Baring's eyes. He was getting the "feel" of the thing, and the idea that under the apparently simple conditions of village gossip and surmise, some real crime might be brought to light—a crime which was, perhaps, hiding behind an accident—was a stimulus both to his imagination and to his ambition.

"But when cobwebs get into your eyes——" said Patty.

"Yet Mr. Mackenzie hasn't thought

it necessary to take steps himself, has he?"

"He may not realize the situation. I am sure his father does not. But—I feel responsible." She looked so distressed that Baring saw this personal side of the question was the strongest. Here was a wealthy young woman who could indulge her fancies, and she had a fancy for hiring a detective to kill off some village gossip about her friends. His lip curled a little. And yet—there might be something more in it. The very fact that the local authorities had seemingly hushed things up might be significant. He might go a little way, and see how it developed.

"I understand that the notebook confession was accepted as genuine without investigation?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes, Mr. Orton said there was no reason to question it."

"I must see that confession. Where is it?—do you know?"

"Mr. Orton has it—I'll take you there at any time," said Patty breathlessly. She understood that she had won him to her purpose.

"Good! By the way, I've given out that I am a book agent, to explain myself, to escape talk."

She nodded. "Yes, I understand."

"And I think you might engage me to catalogue your library here—that will give me an opportunity to be in the house as often as I like."

Patty nodded, but her eyes filled.

"It was in the library, you know, that——"

"Yes, I understand. I'd like to see the room."

"I have kept it locked. Nothing has been changed."

"That's very fortunate. You are sure of that? No one has had an opportunity to enter it?" Baring's eyes were sparkling. The eager hunter, the enthusiast in his strange work of bringing hidden things to light, was coming to the surface.

"I had Roberts lock it up just as it was. I went in the other day to go over the papers in the safe with Mr. Lawton, my father's lawyer, but nothing else in the room was moved."

"Very fortunate," he said again. "Will you let me look at it now?"

Patty Kersey conducted him to the library, which she opened with her own key. Save for the dust that marked a week's vacancy, the room was exactly as it had been when she left it with Lawton. Baring's eye swept over it swiftly, taking in the general arrangement.

"Do you know just where your father was found?"

"In his chair, before the desk. He had fallen forward across the desk, with his head on his arm."

"And the blow—forgive me—but do you know——"

"The blow had fallen on the left temple."

"Then his assailant probably stood just about here. He was not a stranger who had just stolen in through the window unseen. He had at least crossed the room from the window, or had entered from this hall door. In either case, Mr. Kersey was sufficiently familiar with his presence to be sitting quietly here, looking up at the man who stood near enough to him to strike him a deadly blow. Was any weapon found?"

Miss Kersey shook her head. "I don't know of any—I think not."

Another voice interrupted—a calm voice which, in spite of its calmness, sounded strained.

"Orton, the acting coroner, thought the blow had probably been struck with that metal paper weight—we found it on the floor, just there. I replaced it on the table." It was Elijah Kent speaking. He was standing in the open door in an attitude of ease, as though he had been waiting and listening for some time. Now he walked into the room, closing the door behind him. "Will you introduce me, Patty?"

"This is Mr. Baring, who is going to make an inventory of father's books," said Patty calmly. And to Baring she added: "Mr. Kent is our oldest friend and our nearest neighbor."

The men bowed; and, though Kent's manner was scrupulously correct, Bar-

ing was in no doubt whatsoever as to the annoyance with which this oldest friend and nearest neighbor of the Kerseys regarded the presence of this inadequately explained stranger.

"Is Mr. Baring beginning his work this evening?" he asked, with lifted eyebrows.

"If Miss Kersey will permit me," Baring answered for himself, "I should like to look things over a bit at once, now that I am here." He suddenly determined that he would not be ousted.

"Then, Patty, may I talk to you a little while somewhere else?" suggested Kent suavely.

"Yes, we'll leave Mr. Baring here. But I'll see you again, Mr. Baring, before you go," Patty said, with intention. Then she led the way back to her favorite porch drawing-room. She seated herself with an air of serene composure which was a flagrant fib in itself, for her heart was beating up in her throat. She hadn't intended to explain to Kent so soon.

"What is the meaning of this, Patty?" he asked. He was evidently trying to speak pleasantly, but he would have succeeded better if the effort had not been so obvious.

"Of what?" Patty parried.

"Of that young man. He is not here merely to inventory the books, is he?" He was watching her steadily.

"I *do* want the books listed and catalogued," she said.

"Isn't that man a private detective?"

Patty laughed helplessly. "You are so dreadfully direct, Ely, you leave no room for an evasive answer, and I really don't like to fib to you. He is a —private investigator."

"What in the name of common sense—where did you get hold of him?"

"Clio Ellerson, a friend of mine you don't know, told me about some very clever work he did in a case she knew about." Patty affected a casual air, gently waving her fan, but she was keenly conscious that there was thunder on Kent's brow. He still tried, however, to restrain its explosion.

"I wish you had consulted me, Patty, before sending for this man," he said, with grieved reproach.

She did not answer.

"Now that you have got him here," he continued, with an effort to appear merely friendly and matter-of-fact, "I suppose you can give him something to do, and then get rid of him."

"I don't want to get rid of him," said Patty Kersey quietly.

"What in Heaven's name do you want him to find out?" he demanded violently.

"The truth."

Kent caught himself up sharply and gave her a queer look. He walked the length of the piazza and stood with his back to her, looking out into the twilight for some moments. When he came back he had recovered his customary manner of whimsical kindliness.

"The truth, Patty," he said gravely, "is a very difficult thing to discover, and when it is found, it is apt to prove a highly explosive material. If you will recall the history of the saints and martyrs, you will understand what I mean. And many of them died for a truth which to-day we know was not the truth, and our truth of to-day will probably be shown to be utterly false in a few hundred years. When you are young, you think the truth is a definite thing, to be measured and weighed and held in the hand. When you are old, you know it's a wreath of mist." He looked at her with the benignity of age, and Patty smiled.

"Ely, you needn't talk to me as though I were seven and you were seventy-nine and too wise to live much longer. I happen to know your age, as well as my own. I am not hunting for an abstract and impossible truth. I simply want an answer to the question —did Mr. Gould kill my father? That can be answered by yes or no, and one or the other must be the truth."

"But that won't end it. If the answer should conceivably be 'No,' then another question would at once arise in its place—who did?"

"Yes," Patty said steadily. "And do

you, as a lawyer, advise me to seek no answer to that question?"

"I do advise it, most earnestly," he answered, to her great surprise. "As a lawyer, I know too well that the law is only an imperfect makeshift for justice. There are crimes which are not really crimes—crimes of passion which are half accidents, half informal justice. You might as well expect a butcher to perform a delicate surgical operation on the eye as to expect the law to deal with such—crimes."

"And you think my father's death was that kind of a crime—or accident?" Patty asked, her eyes fixed upon him thoughtfully.

"Beyond question."

"But I am not invoking the law," she said after a moment. "I am conducting a strictly private investigation——"

"To what end?" he interrupted.

"To satisfy myself as to the facts—since you object to the word 'truth.'"

"You are a true daughter of Eve," he said, his irritation again rising. "It is just curiosity. And, like Eve, you will bring a lot of trouble——"

"On whom?" she interrupted, in her turn.

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "How do I know who may become involved? Patty, please drop this matter. I can understand how it may have seemed your duty to follow up the question, but, believe me, it isn't. I can see—farther than you do. Drop it for me. Because I ask it." He bent toward her in the twilight, and his voice, which could be very persuasive when he was not in a temper, was at its mellowest and most beguiling.

Patty Kersey looked at him a minute in silence. For beyond anything he had a right to guess, she was moved by the impulse to yield to his request. He so seldom begged anything, did Elijah Kent! He usually commanded. As a child, Patty had adored the autocratic young man who had petted her and tyrannized over her in turn, and who was at that time a frequent and welcomed visitor. When she had gone away to school, it was "Ely" much more than her father for whom she was homesick. And when she returned, after school and Europe had done their utmost for her, it was the discovery that Ely and her father had nothing to do with each other these days and that she was to see little of her old friend, which gave her one of the keenest pangs of that disillusionizing return home. And here Ely was asking her in that old, compelling way of his, to do something—just to please him! Her eyes were troubled as she looked at him, and her sensitive lips were not quite steady, but she shook her head.

"I'm sorry, Ely," she said coaxingly, "more sorry than I can say, when you put it in that way—but—I can't stop now. I—must know."

"You are a foolish, obstinate, wrong-headed child, and I'd like to shake you. You haven't any right to look like a gentle angel when you are really so obstinate!" He stood glowering at her with the perplexed helplessness of a giant defied by a pygmy. "Can't you see that, in an affair of this nature, I know better than you do what is best?"

"But, Ely, what's the harm?" she urged.

"I can't go into all the possibilities. For the last time of asking, Patty, will you drop this foolish scheme?"

"With the last atom of obstinacy in me, Ely, no, I won't. So now, what?" She smiled to soften her refusal.

"Then good night, Patty," he said abruptly, and walked off into the night without further words. He was afraid to trust himself.

It is to be said for Kent that he did not for a moment question the authenticity of Gould's confession. Like Doctor Mackenzie, he was inclined to pooh-pooh the village gossip about Dana, and to believe that it would die down of itself. He had considered Doctor Mackenzie's attempt to have Gould's confession repudiated a thoughtless impulse, based merely on the doctor's regard for Miss Gould. His annoyance over Patty's unadvised action in engaging a detective was based wholly upon his conviction that it was best not to stir up past scandals, and that an investigation into the reasons for Gould's

enmity would reveal something to Kersey's discredit which it would be as well to leave buried. But, naturally, he could not explain his reasons fully to Patty, since his chief object was to keep her mind at peace.

Patty sat without moving for a few minutes after he left her. Then she winked away two tears. She felt very small and very much alone in the world. Why should Ely be so—dictatorial? Couldn't he see that it was necessary for her to learn the truth about the matter? It was all very well for him to juggle with words in his lawyer's fashion, but so long as people were saying slanderous things about Dana, and Evelyn had gone away, somebody had to look after things, and who would if she didn't?

"Miss Kersey?" It was Baring's voice in the doorway behind her, and it recalled her to the course to which she was committed.

"Yes, Mr. Baring. Will you sit down?" She put a little extra dignity into her tones.

"I have been looking the room over rather carefully, and I want to ask you a few questions before I go back to the hotel. In the first place, about the safe."

"Oh—I forgot to tell you. The safe was open when we came into the room—that morning. I closed it, later, but it had been open, evidently, all night."

"Open, then, the evening before?" This caught his attention.

"Yes."

"Was anything missing?"

"I don't know what should be in the safe. Mr. Lawton didn't know. Father used to keep such papers as he might have with him up here, but nobody knows what they were. Father had not been in active business for several years, you know, and he was always very reserved about his affairs." Patty looked distressed. She felt that she was getting into deep waters. But Baring merely nodded.

"To-morrow I should like to look through the safe, if you will open it. There may possibly be something that will give me a hint. Now, one other thing. Has Mr. Elijah Kent a maimed hand?"

"Good heavens, no! Whatever made you ask that?" Patty stared through the dusk at Evan Baring as though she suddenly doubted his sanity.

"Oh, nothing," he said carelessly. "But there is some one you know who has a maimed hand?"

"Yes—Newton Payne," she said hesitatingly. And instantly she thought of Kent's warning that if she pursued this inquiry it would go farther than she would like. The Newton Payne story was not a pleasant one to tell, and here Baring's eyes were demanding it. She braced herself for the ordeal, and told him the outline of Payne's history, his injury, and his vengeful persecution through the past years. Baring listened with the absorbed attention which made his memory an infallible register.

"And he is living now in that little cottage across the road!" he said thoughtfully. "Was he at home the night of the tragedy?"

"I don't know. He has been away ever since, at any rate. That I'm sure of. I've been watching for him!"

"Some of your servants probably would know when he left. I'll try to find out to-morrow. Now I'll say good night, Miss Kersey."

"But, Mr. Baring—one moment. What made you ask that question about Mr. Kent?"

"Oh, nothing, Miss Kersey——"

"Please! I want you to keep nothing from me, Mr. Baring—nothing whatever." She spoke with an assumption of authority that made Baring catch a smile between his teeth. But he answered seriously enough:

"Well—it was simply that on examining your father's desk I found, under the blotter, a sheet of paper with the mark of a maimed hand upon it. A crude drawing, but curious and noticeable. You must heve seen it when you went over things with Mr. Lawton."

"No, I didn't see it," Patty answered. "I never thought of looking under the blotter! But—that's just like Newton

Payne! He was always doing creepy things like that!"

"I also found a letter under the blotter, written by your father, which concerned Elijah Kent. Mr. Kent has aspirations toward the bench, I gather. Well, this letter shows that your father meant to frustrate that ambition. It is addressed to Jeremiah Lawton, and it contained instructions to his correspondent to take certain measures which, if carried out, would have undoubtedly interfered seriously with the success of Mr. Kent's professional career."

"Oh!" Patty gasped. "How could he? How *could* he?"

Baring watched her curiously.

"I have laid the letter aside, in case you want to see it. Since it was not sent, it will have no effect. But——" He hesitated, trying to see her face in the dim light. "It was probably fortunate for Mr. Kent that Mr. Lawton never received it, or acted on it."

"Oh, I hope Ely will never know!" She breathed the words to herself rather than to him.

"Does Mr. Kent sympathize with your plan to have a further investigation made?" Baring asked casually. He was feeling his way among these unknown human quantities.

"No-o—not exactly," she admitted. But she looked a little surprised at his question.

"But you still wish me to go on?"

She nodded positively. "Will you?"

"I'll look into it a bit," he said cautiously.

And then he said "Good night" and went off, and Patty Kersey rose with a tense sigh and went into the house.

And after some minutes of undisturbed stillness, there was a slight stir among the syringa bushes just in front of the porch, and a woman slid out from among the shadows and slipped around the house to the servants' entrance. Patty Kersey, in assuring Baring that their conversation would not be overheard, had not contemplated the possibility that any one would deliberately plan to overhear it, and that the fringe of ornamental shrubs about the house offered a peculiarly safe shelter for a determined eavesdropper.

CHAPTER XII.

Evan Baring's first care the next morning was to establish his official status as a book agent, and to this end he made himself a conspicuous figure in the village, getting names of book buyers from his landlord, talking books right and left, and making himself agreeable by listening to local gossip. Much of this gossip naturally concerned the double tragedy on Green Tree Hill, and, when half a dozen persons had told him the story, he had stored away in his mind all the varying shades of guess and comment that the general public held.

His first object was to satisfy himself whether there really was anything to investigate. Miss Kersey was evidently concerned for Dana Mackenzie's reputation, and resented the village gossip which she thought reflected upon him. But what, as a matter of fact, did the gossip amount to? And was there ground for regarding it as the smoke of a concealed fire?

Before the day was over he decided that there certainly was more smoke than could be explained by the fire that was known. The coroner's verdict had been hasty and without consideration of any explanation by the obvious one. Baring gathered that there were three views most widely supported. In the first place, there was Orton and his following, who held that the matter was settled by the written confession of the suicide, Gould, and that to reopen it at this point was not only a reflection upon the official action of Orton, but was a mere vicious pandering to the sensation mongers.

The sensation mongers undoubtedly did make up the second class. They quoted Doctor Mackenzie, one of the most influential men of the town, as their authority for pointing out that the confession might easily have been forged. Once admit that, and the way was open for the most exciting guesses and the most diverse and devious pos-

sibilities. The fact that Doctor Mackenzie had made his suggestion under the impulse of a desire to shield his fiancée, Evelyn Gould, and that he was reported to have renounced and repudiated the idea when he made the dismaying discovery that suspicion was pointing toward his own son—all this was disregarded. The possibility opened by his suggestion was enticing to their love of gossip, their craving for excitement. John Kersey had been killed by persons unknown—hey for the hunt!

Then there was a third group, small, and more given to expressing its opinion by significant liftings of the eyebrows and shrugging of the shoulders than by out-and-out speech. And the opinion so expressed was to the effect that it would be to Dana Mackenzie's advantage to make it very clear where he was that night, and why he had run away without announcement or purpose and had not returned for nearly a week. In other words, while they did not go so far as to declare Dana Mackenzie guilty, they demanded that he prove his innocence.

Evan Baring gathered all this gossip as though he were gathering material evidence which he could lay out on a table before him and study. And as a result he decided that a personal acquaintance with the romantic-looking Dana was one of the first steps necessary. That Byronic profile might not signify that its owner would turn murderer on occasion. It certainly did signify that he might be caught in a snare of passion that would make him mad for the moment, or in a tangle of soul tragedy that would ruin his life for good and all. Just what was the nature and extent of Miss Kersey's interest? Would she prefer to clear Miss Gould's father or Doctor Mackenzie's son?

Doctor Mackenzie's home was an old-fashioned country place, and it adjoined the Greenville Hotel, where Baring had taken a room, with only a somewhat extensive garden separating the two houses. The wing of the building which extended into the garden held his office—an office now to be given over to Dana, Baring learned, since Doctor Mackenzie hoped to devote himself more and more to his sanitarium at the farther edge of the village, leaving the town and country practice, which he had built up, in the hands of his son and successor. That, at any rate, had been the plan before this destructive gossip had pilloried Dana. All this Baring had gleaned from the talk on the hotel porch, which, in this clean country town, took the place of the gossipy bar in other places. And now, as he looked from his upper window across the garden, he could see young Mackenzie in that silent office. He was sitting before a large desk which stood near the open window—motionless. Baring watched for half an hour, and the man did not move. He was not reading or doing anything else in the world but think. Baring decided that this was the right occasion to see Mr. Dana Mackenzie at nearer range, and he went out into the street and over to the Mackenzie house and rang the bell marked "Office."

Dana himself opened the door to admit him. His sharply featured face was set against all expression, but, in spite of his effort, he could not keep out of it a certain question, a certain defiance, as he looked at the stranger who had knocked.

"Good morning," said Baring cheerily. "I am that obnoxious person, a book agent, and I scorn false pretenses. I came in to see if I can take your order for any new books that you are going to buy this summer, anyway."

Dana shook his head. "I'm not thinking of buying any books."

"Then begin to think now. You are a professional man. A professional man has to have books. How about magazine subscriptions?" And, thereupon, Evan Baring demonstrated the effectiveness of his smile and the charm of his personality, for, before Dana Mackenzie knew it, the two young men were sitting in his office discussing baseball. In a country town, where everybody knows everybody else to the

point of boredom, a book agent bringing the gossip of the outside world is not the pariah that he is in the office building of a large city. At any rate, Evan Baring wasn't. He talked baseball and books and politics and books and pretty nearly everything else and books, before he worked around to anything personal.

"Didn't I see you on the train yesterday?" he asked, with an air of dawning recognition.

"Yes. I saw you."

"Been out to my part of the world?" asked Baring. Anything to make the man talk! As a revealer of character, talk is better than palmistry.

"I got as far as Chicago, before I was recalled," said Dana sardonically. And from the soundless motion of his lips, Baring guessed that the word he didn't add aloud was an emphatic, "Damn!"

"Were you planning to go farther?"

"Oh, I had no definite plans," said Dana restlessly. "At any rate, I'm here now, and I suppose here I'll stay. For the present."

And then the telephone bell rang, and Baring picked up a paper while Dana talked to some one unseen and unheard.

"Hello!" Dana said. "Oh, yes. Yes, I got in yesterday. . . . Well, I didn't know if you wanted me to. . . . Of course, since you put it that way. . . . All right, I'll come right up. . . . Yes, quite well, thank you. . . . Yes, the address was right. It caught me in Chicago. . . . Yes, at once. . . . Good-by."

There was a mixture of boysish pique and throbbing earnestness in Dana's voice that said as plainly as words could say, "I hope you are being impressed by the fact that I am standing on my dignity!" And no young man uses that tone except in talking to a girl. Baring promptly supplied the name of Patty Kersey, and drew the quite correct inference that Miss Kersey had telegraphed Dana to return. An interesting fact, he thought.

Dana turned from the telephone with a sparkle of excitement in his eye.

"See you again," he said to Baring, with a nod of dismissal.

"O. K.," said Baring cheerfully. "I was just leaving. I am on my way to Miss Kersey's. Business. But I'll drop in again before long."

Dana looked quite as surprised as Baring had expected. "What's your business with Miss Kersey?" he asked bluntly.

"I'm going to catalogue her father's library," said Baring, and then added, with pleasant particularity: "A friend of mine wrote to her about me. That's how I fell into the snap."

"Oh!" Dana favored Baring with a more critical look than he had given him before, but Evan really was an attractive fellow, and most people accepted him at sight. Dana did not. "I'm going up to Miss Kersey's, too," he said. "I'll walk along, if you are going up now."

"O. K. again," responded Baring. "Suits me."

And a few minutes later the two young men were tramping up the Green Tree Road together. The burden of conversation fell chiefly upon Baring, for, though Dana Mackenzie was civil, and at times even more than civil, he seemed absent-minded in general, and absorbed in thought which had no relation to matters at hand. Once he broke into a story Baring was telling with the abrupt question:

"Have you seen Miss Kersey yet?"

"Yes. I went up there last evening. She showed me the library. That's where John Kersey was killed, wasn't it? I read about that affair in the papers."

"So I understand," said Dana curtly.

"And wasn't it somewhere along this very road that the murderer, Gould, committed suicide?"

"Yes."

"Do you know the spot?"

"Farther on a bit. Under what is called the Big Oak—that's what I heard. I haven't seen the place myself." But as he spoke Dana glanced rather sharply at his companion.

"It seems to have stirred Greenville up pretty thoroughly," commented

Baring. "What do you think of the suggestion made by your father that Gould was not the genuine and simon-pure murderer?"

"I think dad is sorry now that he said anything about it," said Dana, with a dry laugh. "There are sleeping dogs that it is much better to let lie. And one of them is named Gossip."

"But Gossip comes of a short-lived family," said Baring lightly.

"There—that's the place," said Dana. "See how it has been trodden down. Those morbid curiosity seekers!" But he stood staring at it himself, with a fascinated look.

It was a large and rather notable oak, standing somewhat back from the road and surrounded by a close growth of scrub oaks and other trees. The ground was tramped down, and a regular pathway had been worn in the grass from the edge of the road, where the curious had tramped back and forth. Baring went over to the spot, and looked back at Dana, who had stopped at the edge of the road.

"He didn't try to hide himself very much," he commented. "Any one passing could have seen him."

"It was dark under the trees," said Dana. Then, with a swift look at Baring, he added: "That is, I suppose it naturally would be. No one would notice him during the night. And he probably wanted to be found by morning."

"Has any question been raised as to whether it might not have been murder rather than suicide?" Baring asked.

Dana looked startled. "No. At least, I haven't heard of it. What a gruesome idea! What made you think of it?"

"Oh—one naturally thinks of possibilities."

"But he wrote that he was committing suicide."

"Yes—*if* he wrote it," Baring said carelessly.

Dana looked at him keenly and dropped into a silence which lasted till they reached the top of the hill.

When they reached the Kersey cottage they were admitted by Roberts, who stared at Dana with an amazement that his trained butler's manner could not entirely conceal. He addressed himself formally to Baring:

"Miss Kersey is in the library, Mr. Baring, and she asked that you come to her there, if you please."

"Tell Miss Kersey," said Dana at once, "that I shall wait out here until she is disengaged." And he swung off to the south porch without further ceremony.

Roberts conducted Baring to the library, and there delivered Dana's message. Miss Kersey dismissed him, and then turned to Baring. There was eager expectation in her look.

"You have met Dana Mackenzie?" she asked quickly.

"Yes. This morning. We walked up here together."

She looked a further question, but he shook his head. "You want me to give you facts, Miss Kersey, not first impressions."

"Yes," she said, with a sigh of patience. "Well—I have unlocked the safe here for you. Is there anything else you want of me?"

"I think not, just now. How shall I shut the safe when I am through?"

"Just close the door. It locks automatically."

"Then I shall probably go out this way, after I have made some notes, without disturbing you."

"Very well, Mr. Baring." She nodded a farewell and left him alone in the library.

Baring's first task was to list the contents of the safe. He hoped that it might somehow be possible to ascertain from Kersey's lawyer, or his New York correspondents, whether this country-house safe was supposed to contain anything more than what he found in it. The contents as revealed were certainly of little significance. There were some tax receipts, some financial statements from a firm of New York brokers, and other papers which on their face did not seem to possess any special value. However, he carefully listed everything, and noted the name of the brokers.

Then he sat down in Kersey's chair and reconstructed in imagination the scene. Kersey had been sitting here, like this, and a man had been standing there, talking familiarly, and he had had the metal paper weight in his hand. The blow had been one of sudden passion. Perhaps he had thought Kersey merely stunned at first. Or—Kersey had been sitting here, like this, and a stranger had entered by the window—a stranger out of the past, whose wrongs went to blood lust. He would have had to cross the entire room to reach the spot from which that blow on the temple could be struck. Would Kersey have waited, without attempt to call assistance? Baring hunted for the electric bell, and found it on the edge of the desk itself, within reach of the owner's hand. A touch would have summoned the servants—and that touch was never given. Then clearly Kersey had no warning of danger before the last moment. The theory of the threatening stranger would have to be taken with critical scrutiny.

As Baring rose from Kersey's chair, he pulled open the top drawer of the desk on the right. It was empty—and he stared with surprise, for in that drawer he had placed two papers the evening before. One was the sheet bearing the mark of a maimed hand, and the other was the letter about Elijah Kent which Kersey had signed and placed under his blotter just before his death. Baring frowned, and opened the other drawers of the desk one after another. There was no sign of the missing papers. He had understood from Miss Kersey that the library would be kept locked, and so he had assumed that these papers, which he regarded as important, could be safely left here. He rang the electric bell, and Roberts appeared immediately at the door.

"Will you say to Miss Kersey that I should very much like to have her come to the library if she can? I shall keep her only a few minutes."

In a few moments Patty came, eager-eyed, tremulous with interest. "Yes, Mr. Baring."

"Have you removed some papers I left in this drawer last night, Miss Kersey?"

"No. I have removed nothing."

"I understood that you would keep this room locked."

"So I have. No one has entered it until I came in to open the safe an hour ago. No one has been in the room but myself."

"But the papers are gone!"

She looked disturbed. "Were they very important, Mr. Baring?"

"Not important at all," he said promptly. "But the fact that they have been taken away might prove important, if we could ascertain who did it. Can't you help me there, Miss Kersey?"

She shook her head. "The key has been in my possession since Roberts locked up last night."

"Where was it? In your pocket?"

"N-o. In the drawer of my writing desk."

"And which of the servants could get access to your room when you were away without attracting attention? Who does the work there?"

"Nita. Oh, you don't think——"

"You have no reason to suspect that Nita might have any interest in this case?"

"No. Oh, no!" She spoke quickly, but she flushed.

He looked at her with thoughtful intentness.

"Will you arrange to send Nita here to me in ten minutes? Send me something from your room—a pair of scissors, a newspaper, a note, anything—just so that it will bring her here herself. In ten minutes!"

Patty nodded. She looked troubled, but she made no protest.

Baring occupied the ten minutes for which he had stipulated in making a drawing of a right hand from which the thumb and forefinger were lacking. He drew it boldly with heavy pencil on a sheet of paper like the one which had disappeared. As he had made a careful study of that bit of drawing the night before, it was not difficult for him to produce a fair copy. He laid this conspicuously on the desk, and then

busied himself adjusting the glass door of a bookcase so that it would serve as a mirror to reflect the desk. When Nita entered, following her tap on the door, Baring had his back to the desk and a book from the open case in his hand.

"Miss Kersey sent this note, sir."

"Yes. Put it on the desk, please."

The mirror served. There was no mistaking the girl's start of surprise, her swift glance at Baring. She placed on the desk the sealed envelope Miss Kersey had sent, and she lingered, her eyes fixed on that paper. Baring turned abruptly.

"Well? What are you waiting for?"

"I thought——" She caught her breath with quick control. "I thought you might want to send an answer."

"Oh, yes. Wait a moment." He opened the envelope, scanned the blank page of note paper which he found inclosed, and then gravely folded the drawing of the hand and inclosed it in another envelope which he sealed.

"Give this to Miss Kersey," he said. The girl dropped her eyelids as she took the packet. Her face had gone white.

"Well, now I wonder just what that means," Baring mused, as he watched her depart. "And I wonder whether she will deliver that as addressed, or confiscate it."

Baring had acted on the natural assumption that if Nita had any personal interest in the actors of the tragic drama, it was most likely to be in connection with Newton Payne, and her unmistakable surprise at discovering yet another drawing of the maimed hand on Kersey's desk satisfied Baring that he was right in this conjecture. But he was puzzled by the disappearance of the other papers. There had been two of these—Kersey's letter to Jeremiah Lawton, and a thin pamphlet which he had evidently intended to inclose in the letter. Baring had glanced over these papers somewhat hastily the previous evening, intending to make a more careful examination of them later, yet he recalled their nature with a good deal of clearness. The letter to Lawton had been brief but vigorous, stating that it was of the utmost importance that Kent should not be on the bench when "our cases" came before the court, and directing Lawton to use the inclosed pamphlet in whatever way he thought best to insure Kent's defeat. "Suppress the date," the writer had added, and underscored it. Naturally Baring had looked at the date. It was twenty years back. The pamphlet was a hot-headed, romantic, and altogether boyish address by Elijah Kent in praise of the French Revolution. Evidently Kersey hoped that by suppressing the date, and making it appear that this was a recent revolutionary utterance of Kent's, he could defeat the election to the bench of a man who could not be counted on to regard favorably "our cases." So far the trail was reasonably clear. But who had been interested in suppressing this document unless it was Kent? If Nita had carried the papers away, for whom was she acting? Baring had said the situation was "cobwebby." He began to feel that the cobwebs were across his own path.

He busied himself for some time making notes regarding the room, and went through the form of handling the books in the cases. Then, with a word to Roberts, he went quietly away. He could hear the murmur of voices on the porch, and realized that Dana Mackenzie must still be there.

But if he left the house without observation, he was not to go far. Where the Kersey grounds touched the Kent garden, Mr. Kent himself was in waiting. He was cutting roses while he waited, but he made no pretense that he was not on the watch for Baring. As soon as the young man came in sight, Kent walked over to the dividing fence, and held up an arresting hand.

"Good day, Mr. Baring. Will you come into my garden? I know that invitation has a sinister sound, but I assure you that my intentions are honorable."

Baring laughed and jumped the fence. Nothing could have been more to his mind. If Mr. Kent would only talk, he was more than ready to listen.

And apparently Mr. Kent meant to be direct.

"Miss Kersey admitted to me last night," he said calmly, "that she had engaged you to investigate things here, so you don't need to keep up the book-agent pose with me. Have you discovered anything startling yet?"

"Nothing whatsoever," said Baring cheerfully.

"I shouldn't expect you to admit it, if you had," Kent remarked dryly. "However, you haven't, and you won't. Simply because there is nothing to discover."

Baring nodded thoughtfully. He was, perhaps, not so much impressed by the statement as by the fact that Kent should think it necessary to be so emphatic.

"If it had not been for some silly village gossip, starting from Doctor Mackenzie's natural desire to remove the stigma from his fiancée's father, the whole matter would have been buried by this time. But unfortunately it came somehow to Miss Kersey's ears, and, womanlike, she couldn't let it alone. Well, now that she has got you here to investigate, I want you, after you have gone through the motions long enough to satisfy your self-respect, to tell her that you can discover nothing, and that she might as well accept the Gould confession at its face value. See the idea?"

Baring thought he did. But he looked up at Kent with guileless innocence as he asked: "You think, then, that Gould really committed the murder?'

Kent was looking at him steadily, but the pupils of his eyes contracted for a moment, as though to shut his thoughts in—and Baring saw it.

"I think there is no good reason for questioning it," he said deliberately.

"But—Miss Kersey evidently does," Baring suggested.

"Yes—and that's why I want you to put her mind at rest. You have probably gathered that the crux of the whole matter is—Dana Mackenzie." He snapped the word out and closed his lips hard upon it. But there was anxiety in the look he fixed on Baring.

"No, I hadn't exactly," Baring admitted.

"Well, in effect it is. Break down Gould's confession, and Dana Mackenzie will be arrested for Kersey's murder. There is a smoldering suspicion all over the village now. And she knows it, unfortunately."

Baring nodded. "Then you think what Miss Kersey really wants is to ascertain quietly and for her own satisfaction whether Dana Mackenzie is or is not guilty."

"She wants you to assure her that he is not guilty," Kent said emphatically. "She may not know it, but that is what she wants you to tell her."

"She seemed equally reluctant to believe Mr. Gould as guilty as the judgment of the local authorities have proclaimed him," said Baring, with a keen glance.

Kent shrugged his shoulders. "Patty Kersey finds it very difficult to believe evil of any one. She is sorry for Evelyn Gould, and would like to tell her that this trouble of hers is all due to a mistake—of course she would. But that would mean involving Dana Mackenzie, which she would like even less. Above everything, she wants to clear young Mackenzie's good name and kill out this silly gossip about him."

"In order that she may marry him?" Baring asked coolly.

"That's her affair," said Kent curtly. His eyebrows were knotted in that very unconciliatory manner which made him respected if not loved in the courtroom. Then, seeming to realize that this was not the manner with which to enlist Baring's coöperation, he condescended to unbend to greater civility. "Miss Kersey is absolutely independent and free to choose for herself, so far as that goes, and, if she should choose Dana Mackenzie, no one could wonder at it. He is a brilliant young physician with a future, well educated, suitable in every way, if she cares for him. But as I say, that's her affair—and it has nothing to do with the question of this

—investigation, if that's what you call it. It really is just—mare's-nesting. She feels that she must see justice done to Dana, because—well, she has an oversensitive conscience and no knowledge of the world whatsoever, and she got a curious idea that she must not allow any one to suffer through connection with her family."

"Yes?" said Baring encouragingly. All gossip was fish to his net. But Kent evaded the implied question.

"Miss Kersey has lived quite apart from the practical world. She has been protected from everything harsh—and I hope she may always be. Good heavens, I want her to be happy. If she now thinks that her happiness is bound up with Dana Mackenzie, certainly I do not wish to interfere." He glowered at Baring as though that innocent young man were somehow threatening Miss Kersey's happiness. Was he? Baring wondered.

"You think, then," he said calmly, "that if I pursue this investigation, it may end up by leaving young Mackenzie convicted, instead of merely suspected?"

Kent looked both annoyed and surprised at this deduction. "Nothing of the sort," he snapped. "I think the whole thing is a mistake—and mistakes are awfully dangerous things to meddle with. What's the use of stirring up mud? If my opinion counts with you ——"

"Yes—certainly it counts," Baring conceded. He reflected that it was not necessary to say in which direction it counted.

"Then do you think you can see your way to acting on my suggestion, and dropping the matter——"

"After I have gone through the motions long enough to satisfy my self-respect," Baring said gravely.

Kent looked at him keenly, half suspicious of a double meaning, but Baring's air of quiet frankness was disarming. "By the way," Baring continued conversationally, "I understand that you are an authority on the French Revolution."

"I? Oh, no, you're mistaken," said Kent. His air of frank surprise was too genuine to be merely the disclaimer of modesty. He looked at Baring with curiosity and inquiry. "What gave you that idea?"

"I saw an article of yours on that subject—a little pamphlet," said Baring. "It gave me a high regard for your historical accomplishments."

"In the name of wonder!" said Kent, a look of understanding dawning upon his face. "You mean a thesis I wrote in college which my father had printed out of family pride. I haven't seen it for twenty years. May I ask where you came across that curiosity?"

"I saw a copy in Mr. Kersey's library yesterday." He was closely observing Kent, but either Kent was an astonishingly good actor, or he had nothing on his mind to conceal. He looked much interested.

"I shall certainly ask Miss Kersey to let me see it. I didn't suppose there was a copy in existence," he said.

"You were probably more of a revolutionist in those days than you are now," suggested Baring.

"I have studied law in the meantime," said Kent shortly. But a change came over his face—a look half amused, half dismayed. Baring guessed that the idea had just struck him that the old pamphlet might not do the present-day lawyer any good. "I certainly shall ask Miss Kersey for it," he added, with a laugh.

"It was there last night," said Baring carelessly. "If you don't find it, you might ask that maid—Nora, isn't that her name?"

"I'd like to see it," said Kent, nodding. But Baring noted that he did not correct the name which had been purposely miscalled. "How long do you expect to stay?" he asked abruptly, with a challenging look.

"Well, I am to catalogue the libary, you know," said Baring inscrutably. "It may take me—some time!"

When Baring reached the road he glanced back. Kent was already on his way over to the Kersey place.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the meantime, Dana Mackenzie and Patty were having a serious conversation out on the porch.

"Dana—what made you go away like that?" Patty asked reproachfully, after the first greetings were over.

"Like what?" asked Dana. He was glowering at her as though his eyes could not fill themselves with the sight of her, but for all of his obvious devotion, there was a sullen look on his handsome face.

"You know what I mean," Patty protested. "Mysteriously. And without telling any one. As though you were running away."

"I was running away. And you know very well why."

"That's nonsense," said Patty, without pretending to misunderstand. "And it gave people a chance to—talk."

"So I have been given clearly to understand," he said bitterly. "But who could have foreseen such a complication? When I received your telegram, I didn't realize the situation, but if you wanted me to come back, I should have come from the ends of the earth. Then, when I arrived, father explained that the amiable people of Greenville had been entertaining themselves by turning me into a murderer in my absence. Pleasant thing, to know that people turn to look after me in the street and whisper together——"

"They won't, now that you have come back," she interrupted. "That's why I wired you. Your father didn't seem to think it mattered, but I felt you could not afford to ignore a thing like that. It was just because you had rushed away so—so unaccountably ——"

"Well, they didn't take long to account for it," he muttered. He dropped his head on his clenched fists, with his elbows on his knees.

Patty watched him with grave reproach in her eyes. "Dana! You mustn't put your head down. You must hold it up!"

Dana lifted his head promptly, and the flush of annoyance on his face had at least the effect of removing some of its melancholy.

"It's all very well to say hold your head up, but I don't think you quite realize all that this means to me," he protested. He felt that Patty was exasperating.

"You didn't expect to go through life without ever having people say unjust things about you—did you? Because people *will* talk. Even I know that!" Patty tried to look as wise as she felt.

Dana looked still more annoyed. "You're not very sympathetic. This isn't just ordinary gossip. And I'm not —well, I'm not in an ordinary position. For a doctor—especially a young man just beginning to be a doctor and with everything dependent on the good will of the community—for him to be suspected of murder——"

"Yes, Dana, it isn't pleasant," said Patty gravely.

"It's ruinous!" cried Dana explosively. "A doctor's reputation is as sensitive as a woman's!"

"Well—if I were accused, I don't think I should go around with a guilty-conscience air and give people a chance to say that they weren't surprised I should look so miserable," said Patty sagely.

Dana rose restlessly and walked up and down. "Nobody would believe it of you for a minute, so the comparison doesn't hold," he said gloomily.

"Then why should they believe it of you?"

"Because I have such a devil of a temper."

"That doesn't prove anything, except that you were not properly brought up. I didn't get hold of you soon enough!" That was not a wise remark, as she realized in a moment.

"Oh, Patty——" Dana stopped before her abruptly, and it was very clear that something which had nothing in the world to do with the cruel village gossip was on the tip of his tongue.

"And that reminds me of one thing that I wanted to say to you," she went on very rapidly, with a palpable pretense of not understanding what was in the air. "You must not stop coming

up here to see me. You must come—often. You must let people see that we are friends."

"You know very well why I can't come here—why I can't be friends with you," said Dana impetuously. "I wouldn't have come to-day if you hadn't telephoned——"

"That's why I did telephone. I just knew you would be silly enough to think you were going to stay away," Patty explained with great composure.

"It's all very well for you to talk, but don't you know that you are asking too much for human endurance?" Dana demanded in exasperation. When you are trying to convey to a girl an idea of your romantic suffering, it is trying to have her characterize your conduct as silly. It makes you feel young, and, if there was one thing Dana Mackenzie hated, it was to be made to feel young. He stood frowning at her now in a way that was very picturesque but very young indeed.

"And the answer to that is just 'Nonsense!'" said Patty cheerfully. "You mean to imply that because I told you I could not marry you, you can't stand the very sight of me any more, and I say that is nonsense, because we had very good times together talking about all sorts of things not in the least connected with marriage—don't you remember? You told me about politics and I told you about poetry, and it was very good for both of us. We were friends. And we are going to keep on being friends. Yes, we are, Dana Mackenzie. I won't be dropped like that. Besides——"

"Besides," said Dana, dropping into the chair beside her and looking at her with all his soul in his handsome eyes, "you think I need the support of your friendship in the face of the public to stop the gossip that is slurring my name! Oh, I see your generous heart under your words all right enough. And, of course, you are right, so far as that goes. Your friendship will be a vindication in a way—but it isn't enough!" He suddenly put his hand over hers and drew it to his breast. "Your love would be still more convincing, Patty, darling! Can't you—oh, can't you? There's nobody in the world for me but you—Patty, my Patty! Let me—let me announce our engagement! That will prove your confidence in me better than anything else!" Urgent and sweet as a tropic wind, his voice seemed to wrap her about like a snare.

"Dana! Don't—please!" Patty recovered possession of her hand and put it behind her. Then suddenly she started up. "Oh, who is in that room? I—heard some one!" The room behind her, from which the south porch opened, was a long living room, and the windows were open. The curtains were impervious to light, but a very incomplete hindrance to sound—especially the sound of such impassioned words as Dana's!

"Just the wind—flapping the curtains," said Dana impatiently. He more than half suspected her of improvising an alarm as a means of interrupting his speech, and his voice, which had been so eloquent, sounded unmistakably sulky.

"Look—please!" she breathed.

He stepped to the window and swept the curtain aside with one hand. The room was empty.

"No one there," he said coldly.

"Well—there might have been! And I thought I heard a step. Besides, Dana, I don't want you to be—talking like that! It just makes me unhappy—and I know you don't want to do that—do you?" Her coaxing way could have persuaded one to do almost anything more easily than to stop making love to her, but she didn't know that!

"How about me? Do you suppose I am happy?" demanded Dana.

"You won't be happy as long as you keep wishing that the good bread and butter I am offering you were lemon pie with meringue," said Patty sagely. "But the bread and butter is quite good! In fact, I think I might say that it isn't just plain bread and butter, but baking-powder biscuits with sweet butter and strawberry jam—and that's really better than lemon pie any day!"

"Oh, Patty, Patty! Every word you say makes it harder and harder for me to give up hope!"

"Dana! What do you want most in the world just now?"

"You!"

"No, you don't. You want to have your name cleared from every slightest breath of suspicion. You want to know that your father is proud of you and that all your neighbors believe in you. You want to feel that a useful and successful life is just before you. Now, don't you? Don't you, Dana?"

"Well—one ambition seems just as much out of my reach as the other," he mumbled evasively.

"No, it isn't! No, it isn't, Dana! I can't give you your first wish, because —— Well, there *is* a reason, even if I can't explain to you. But I am going to give you the second thing—yes, I am, Dana! And then—*then* you won't have any hard feeling against me because I couldn't give you the other thing—will you, Dana?"

Against his will he yielded to her persuasiveness and laughed, though it was a hopeless sort of a laugh, too.

"So you are going to give me the confidence of the public and make people stop whispering, when I pass by! How are you going to do it?"

"Oh—I'm not telling you all my plans. But part of them, and a very important part, is what I have told you —you must let people see that we are friends. And we are, Dana! It's true! For always!" She clasped her hands together in her earnestness.

And at that moment Kent came sauntering up to the gate, whistling a tune more ostentatious than tuneful. He was carrying his hat in his hand, and he did not seem to notice the two on the porch until he had been in full view for at least a full minute. Then he smiled and waved his hat, and opened the gate.

"Oh, there's Ely!" said Patty, under her breath. "How—how odd that he should come in on this side! He usually comes in right through the hall by the side door!" She looked at him intently and questioningly as he came up the steps—but Elijah Kent smiled—with no apparent effort—at both of them.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE FEBRUARY 20TH POPULAR.

WHAT THEY GOT WHEN THEY ASKED

OCCASIONALLY, Congressman Barkley, of Kentucky, looks with pessimistic eye upon the world. He is particularly downcast when his glance takes in both the world and the Republican party. There is a grand example of this fact in the following campaign thunder he turned loose not long ago in a speech dealing with the tariff:

"In the past, Mr. Chairman, when the people have asked the Republican party for free lumber, in order that they might build humble homes, in which to abide, the Republicans have responded by placing acorns upon the free list. When, in the past, the people have asked for cheaper meat, upon which to feed themselves and their children, the Republicans have responded by placing bones upon the free list. When we have asked for cheaper shoes, they have given us free catgut. When we have asked for cheaper milk, they have responded with free dragon's blood. When we have asked for cheaper sugar, they have handed us untaxed ipecac.

"When we have prayed for cheaper iron and steel, they have responded by placing junk upon the free list. When we have asked them for bread, they have responded with free appetite. When we have implored them to give us a cheaper beefsteak, they have replied by placing teeth upon the free list!"

Bill Heenan and the Coward

By William Slavens McNutt

Author of "At the Moon Trail's End," "The Man Who Lost Himself," Etc.

If you can understand the case of a man who declares he is not a coward and yet won't fight when he is insulted and slapped in the face, you'll do more than Bill Heenan was able to do. It's not an instance of a man too proud to fight

BIG Bill Heenan was on the loose. The crude, little, one-story frame structure that housed the Gold Creek Saloon vibrated to the roar of his voice, as he stood before the rough bar, beating time with a bottle, while he shouted the words of an old woods chant. Some twoscore men, that number being near to the sum total of idle males in the little camp of Preble at that time, were pressed close about the big Alaskan, drinking copiously at his expense, and treasuring in memory choice bits of repartee that came from his lips. Beside many a camp fire, and in many a cabin far and near, it did a stranger's reputation no harm for him to be able to say: "I mind bein' on a bat with Bill Heenan such an' such a place; an', while we was lined up at the bar, he said thus an' so."

His companions may have been satisfied with the progress of the orgy, but Heenan was not. Having roared out his rude song to the last line of the final and most vulgar of all the verses, he smashed on the bar the bottle with which he had been leading the roystering choristers, and swore disgustedly.

"Three o'clock in the afternoon, an' not a black eye in the gang to show for all the good booze I've paid for!" he complained. "This place ain't a camp, it's a graveyard. Don't tell me! You people that live here don't live. You're all dead ones, playin' hooky from the coffin. If an undertaker ever sees any of you walkin' round loose, he'll take you back where you belong an' nail on the lid. I try to get me a little action, with a hand or two o' stud, an' every gamblin' man I meet starts in arguin' with me about a limit! You hear me shout! There ain't no limit to action, an' there ain't no action where there's a limit. Action's what I want! Action for me or my money, an' I don't care which. An' do I get it in this camp? I do not! I buy enough booze for you corpses to make a stone rabbit come to life an' go bear huntin'. An' what do I get for my money, huh? What do I get for it? Peace an' quiet, you poor, sleep-lovin' dead ones! Can't somebody start a little somethin' to save me yawnin' my jaws off their hinges?"

The men laughed boisterously, but there was an uneasy note in their mirth. Some had seen Heenan on a rampage, and others had heard of things he had done. There was in his record no blemish of a vicious action during any of his occasional wild sprees in camp, but there were tales of wild escapades entered upon in the spirit of sheer exuberant mischief; and of fights fought joyously, but fought through to the last measure of strength that was in strong men. The talk and laughter went on uninterrupted; but, whereas prior to his complaining about the monotony of the party, Heenan had been closely hemmed in, he soon thereafter noted that he stood somewhat separated from the rest in a clear space; a space that grew slowly but steadily larger, as those nearest edged away from him, with an evident attempt to give the impression that they

were in fact doing no such thing. He noted it, and glinting lights of deviltry flickered and danced in his small, blazing blue eyes, as he turned his back to the bar and slowly rolled up his sleeves.

"When I speak of a little speed, yuh all back away from me, same as if I was a hard-breathin' Siwash with a big feed o' stale salmon under my belt," he declared. "Come on, let's have a little row! I do my best. Can't some few of you pitch in an' give me a little argument? Or ain't you got some one guy in camp big enough an' young enough to muss with me fifty-fifty? Huh?"

"That guy Bramley ought to be here," some one said, and the crowd laughed.

"Bramley?" Heenan questioned with a show of interest. "Who's he? Some skookum party?"

"He's a chechahco, Bill," one of the men informed him. "Ain't been in the country more'n a year or so; but, oh, boy! I don't know how his appetite is, but he's sure husky enough to digest an awful meal o' trouble!"

"Lead me to him!" Heenan chortled joyfully. "Lead me to where he's at. He's a big moose, you say?"

"He's bigger'n you, Bill," some one volunteered. "Let's go look him up."

With a shout the crowd surged toward the door. From the rear of the room came a high, quavering cry:

"Oh, Bill! Hey, Bill, lis'en a minute."

Heenan turned at the door, looked back and laughed, as he beheld Tin Can Harris, his scrawny, undersized little partner, sprawled helplessly in a corner on the floor, with his head propped against the wall.

"Where you goin', Bill?" Harris inquired in a weak, tired voice, which barely carried the length of the room.

"Fight!" Heenan explained tersely. "They tell me there's a guy here in camp that ought to make me spread myself. We're goin' to look 'im up."

"Ah, Bill!" Tin Can groaned. "Wait just an hour, will yuh? Just an hour?"

"An hour?" Heenan echoed. "What for?"

"I want to see the muss," Tin Can explained, "an' I'll be able to walk by then. My head's clearin' up fine. I'm nigh sober from my eyes up, now. Wait till I get so's I can walk, will yuh?"

Heenan laughed aloud, and, crossing the room to where his partner lay, turned the little man over on his face, grasped him by the slack of his shirt and his belt, lifted him up, and strode toward the door with him, carrying him as one might carry a suit case.

"Wait for you?" he boomed, as he packed him out the front door. "I've waited all day for somethin' to wake me up, an' I ain't goin' to wait no longer. But I'll take you along to the party with me, you little shrimp!"

"All—r-r-r-r-ight. B-B-Bill!" Tin Can stuttered, as Heenan swung out into the street with him. "Just—so long as I d-d-don't miss it. Hold me up so my head don't hit the stumps, will you?"

Preble was a small camp in the second year of its existence. It lay some three days' journey inland from a southwestern Alaska port, nestling in a narrow valley between giant peaks of the Alaska coast range. It was a one-street camp, built in a clearing on the southern bank of a little mountain stream. The street was built of planks, and on its either side, along its entire length, narrow, rickety raised sidewalks spread out over the muskeg and stumps connecting the variously situated cabins with the main and only artery of both commerce and frivolity. The tardy summer sun was yet high above the mountain peaks when the hilarious crowd, followed by Heenan, with the helpless Tin Can in his grasp, emerged from the Gold Creek Saloon and went staggering down the single-planked street, shouting for Bramley. Whatever business may have been in progress, while Heenan and the crowd yet remained in the Gold Creek, was most certainly suspended, subsequent to their well-heralded emergence therefrom. Clerks, storekeepers, gamblers, barkeepers, sellers, and buyers left in

abeyance whatever matters happened to be at hand and hurried forth to see the fun. Down the street the procession straggled, the men shouting aloud and gradually falling into step to the steadily repeated cry: "We want Bramley—he's the guy! We want Bramley—he's the guy!"

Among the guests gathered on the porch of the Cleaver Hotel were a number of chechahcos, both men and women, who had arrived in camp from the coast but that morning. To one of them, a busy old gentleman with a nose for disaster, the shouting crowd suggested the possibility of a lynching.

"Are they going to hang him?" he inquired shrilly.

"Hangin' ain't harsh enough," an old-timer near by jested solemnly. "They're goin' to burn him at the stake; an' then float his ashes plumb out of the Territory on the first seagoin' breeze that blows. They never do nothin' halfway in this man's land."

The shouting crowd came opposite the hotel just as the old man spoke, roaring out the slogan: "We want Bramley—he's the guy!' We want Bramley—he's the guy!"

Engrossed in watching their passage, no one noticed the actions of a slim, brown-haired young girl, standing on the hotel porch. She had arrived from the coast that morning, and was registered at the Cleaver as Miss Ethel Kempton from Kansas City, Missouri. When mention was made of lynching and the stake, the girl swayed dizzily and clutched one of the pillars of the porch to keep herself erect. She stood there swaying and staring at the shouting crowd through eyes that were wide with horror. Her lips writhed with the effort to utter speech, which could not force the lock that fear had fixed upon her throat.

The no-less busy wife of the busy old gentleman, who expected, and very evidently hoped, that there was to be some sort of an execution, loudly demanded that some action be taken to stop the outrage.

"Aw, nothin' terrible's goin' to happen," the hotel proprietor assured her. "Don't pay any attention to the lies these old sour doughs pass off as jokes. See the big guy there, luggin' the little fellow? That's Bill Heenan. He's on the loose an' lookin' for action. They're huntin' up this man Bramley to give him a fight. If any man's got a chance to lick him, Bramley has."

The torturing tide of fear drained from the girl who clutched the pillar for support, and who stood, panting relief from the passage of its smothering flow, staring tensely at big Bill Heenan.

He was a figure to stare at, was big Bill, as he strode slowly down the street in the midst of the frenzied crowd, unconcernedly lugging Harris with his right hand. The physical power of him was told in the way he carried his partner. He swung him along with no more visible effort than the average man might display in carrying any small bundle of merchandise along the street. He walked with the slight shoulder swagger of the man to whom absolute dominance is as much a habit of life as breathing. He carried his bared head far back, and his tiny, wide-set blue eyes were brilliantly ablaze with the light of mischief. He was going to fight, and he loved the thought of it. The coming fight was to him no mere brutal matter of inflicting and receiving punishment. Health flowed through him as ceaselessly and irresistibly as down-plunging waters through a mountain gorge, and the flood of it washed from him, almost unnoted, the pain of ordinary wounds and bruises. It did not occur to him that an antagonist, near to being his equal, might suffer more. There was no hate in his heart; only joy at the thought of a contest. For the man who stood up to him in his present mood and afforded him a grueling fight he would have no animus; rather a sincere admiration. He would, indeed, feel that the man who fought him to a standstill had done him a favor. He wanted to fight for the sheer joy of putting forth the tremendous store of restless, clamoring strength that was in him against that of one his equal, and spending it

lavishly unto the peace that should follow the poverty of exhaustion.

Heenan had just passed the Cleaver Hotel, when one of those before him called out, "Here he is!" The crowd scampered away from Heenan, leaving him standing alone in the middle of the roadway, still holding his limp partner in his right hand. A moment, and from around the corner of the general store there came into view a man who was near to being as certain a challenge to the eye as Heenan himself. Physically he was a bigger man than the Alaskan, standing fully six feet five. Huge as he was, he was as trimly built as a sprinter. But massive as his wonderfully proportioned body was, it was the face that most arrested attention. It was the sensitive, finely chiseled face of an artist, a poet. The man's complexion was as fresh and clear as that of a girl. His eyes were the soft blue of clear southern skies. They were large and dreamily tender. The nose was thin and high and finely cut. It was such a face as a master painter might create as his ideal of a sainted martyr. There was that in the mold of feature and expression that recalled to mind Hoffman's conception of the Nazarene. He came forward accompanied by the Reverend Ainsmith, the camp's one minister, a stooped, withered little old man, whose small stature startlingly emphasized the hugeness of Bramley. He came forward, and, with the eyes of the crowd upon him, stopped in wonderment and stared about.

"That's him, Bill! There he is!" a man called out to Heenan.

Heenan released his grasp of Tin Can, and the little fellow plumped face downward on the plank street and struggled dizzily to a sitting posture.

"Is he as big as he looks, Bill?" he inquired, dazedly staring at Bramley, "or am I seein' double?"

Heenan laughed aloud with joy at sight of the big man before him and stepped forward. "Your name Bramley?" he inquired.

Bramley nodded.

"I'm Bill Heenan," the big Alaskan went on, advancing slowly toward him, "an' you an' me's elected to mingle an' find out which is which."

"Mingle?" Bramley echoed, not understanding.

"You an' me's goin' to fight!" Heenan elucidated. "I'm out lookin' for action, an' the camp's voted for you to give it to me. From the look of you, I reckon they voted right."

"No, no," the Reverend Ainsmith protested nervously. "Mr. Bramley ——"

"Shoo that buzz fly off o' you," Heenan said, with a frown, "an' come to it. We'll show this bunch what a real scrap looks like!"

Bramley took a backward step as Heenan advanced.

"I—I don't even know you," he said, in a deep, vibrant voice, that harmonized perfectly with the impression of great strength that he gave forth. "I have no reason to fight you."

"Oh! Reason!" Heenan exclaimed. "If it's a reason you want, I'll give you one."

He sprang forward swiftly, and his open right hand flashed out and struck on Bramley's left cheek with the sharp report of a small firearm. The blow delivered, Heenan sprang away, crouched in fighting posture.

"Here we go!" he sang out jubilantly. "That's reason enough, ain't it? Yip-ay-yowie! Try this!"

With the words he sprang in and swung at Bramley with his right fist. Bramley ducked the blow and clinched. They wrestled for a brief space, heaving and straining back and forth. Suddenly Heenan swore savagely, and, with a sweep of his right arm, thrust his antagonist back from him. He stood still for a moment, eying Bramley with a puzzled air, and when he spoke there was anger in his voice for the first time.

"What's the matter with you?" he growled. "You ain't tryin' to fight. You hang in my arms like a sack o' meal. What's wrong with you? You sick or somethin'?"

Bramley made no move to resist the accusation. He hung his head, shaken and sick with shame. Heenan, watch-

ing him narrowly, became aware of a commotion in the crowd. He turned his head to seek the cause, just as Ethel Kempton wrenched herself free of the press of men surrounding Heenan and Bramley, and dashed forward into the clearer space between them. She faced Bramley, her small head thrown proudly back, her blazing eyes alight with pride.

"George!"

It was at one and the same time a command and a plea, that cry. Bramley cringed miserably under the lash of it.

"You—you don't understand, Ethel," he mumbled. "Don't make a scene, please. I'll tell you later. I'll explain ——"

The girl's face went suddenly hard and bleak.

"You are!" she said, in a horrified tone. "Good heavens! You are!"

She turned and faced Heenan.

"You are a contemptible, drunken beast," she said evenly, "but, at least, you are better than that!"

She gestured scornfully at Bramley. As she hurled out the last words, she turned and walked steadily back to the hotel through the crowd that opened to make way for her.

"Aw, hit the dirty coward one for luck, Bill," some one urged, and some of them laughed.

"You see something funny?" Heenan snarled, turning to the crowd. "You see something round here to laugh at? Well, I don't; an' I'll lick the man that does. What are you standing round here lookin' at? Want me to hit somebody, do you? All right then, I'll take a swat at any man that's in reach of me thirty seconds from now. Scatter out o' this, you blatting, bloodthirsty lot of sheep, you! Get moving about your business, or I'll give a lot o' you something to take home an' put arnica on. Get going now!"

The crowd suddenly dispersed. Heenan stood in the center of the street, looking gloomily at the shameful figure of Bramley. Then with an oath he turned and strode away toward his cabin.

Three hours later, Heenan sat on the edge of his bunk in his cabin, his head in his hands, sunk deep in a mood of intense gloom that was the inevitable aftermath of one of his wild outbursts. The door was thrown violently open and George Bramley rushed in. His appearance was that of a maniac, and he brandished a revolver in his right hand.

"I'm going to kill you," he raved at Heenan.

The big Alaskan surveyed the big man with a bored eye.

"All right!" he acquiesced disinterestedly. "Let her go!"

"I'm not going to murder you," Bramley rushed on, "I'm going to kill you in a fair fight. Where's your gun? Get it! Get it quick! I'll give you an even chance."

Heenan was plainly astonished at this. He squinted sharply at Bramley, evidently attempting to decipher the psychology of the man. He gave it up with a shrug and arose.

"All right!" he said, again indifferent.

He slouched lazily across the room and got his coat that hung on the wall, extracted his gun from the pocket, and slowly turned about to face Bramley the weapon hanging at his side, loose held in his right hand. Bramley was trembling violently, but he stood his ground, holding his gun leveled at Heenan.

"I've got my gun," Heenan drawled. "What are you waiting for?"

Bramley could not, or did not, answer. He kept Heenan covered and waited.

"Go on," Heenan invited him. "I'll give you the first shot. You'll be lucky to hit the Territory of Alaska, shakin' an' shiverin' the way you are!"

A moment more Bramley held his gun trained on Heenan, and then with a groan he dropped the weapon at his side and sprawled forward over the table with his head resting on his crossed arms.

"I can't!" he groaned. "I can't do it!"

"I know you can't," Heenan replied

calmly, as he replaced his own gun in the pocket of his coat. "You're built wrong somehow, ain't yuh?"

Bramley raised his haggard face and stared hopelessly at Heenan. "Why did you want to fight with me this afternoon?" he asked.

"Just for the fun of the thing," Heenan answered him casually.

"Fun!" Bramley exclaimed tragically. "Do you know what you did? Do you know?"

Heenan smiled grimly. "From the look o' things, I reckon I saved one o' the gamest, prettiest-lookin' little women I ever laid eyes on from throwin' herself away on an overgrown pup like you.

"She came up here to marry me," Bramley said hopelessly. "She only got here this morning. I didn't know she was coming. We had planned to wait another year, but she came."

"She's the kind that would," Heenan said, nodding.

"I was bringing the minister to the hotel to perform the ceremony," Bramley went on, "when you—when you ——"

"When I stepped in an' showed you up in front o' the girl," Heenan finished for him.

"She thinks I'm a coward!" Bramley muttered.

"Well, ain't you?" Heenan questioned, arching his brows in expression of surprise.

"No!" Bramley declared loudly, springing to his feet and banging his fists on the table. "No, I'm not!"

"You're an awful good imitation of one," Heenan said, smiling incredulously.

"I'm not afraid of being hurt," Bramley declared doggedly, "and I'm not afraid of being killed."

"You sure are awful 'fraid of somethin'," Heenan insisted. "What is it?"

"I'm afraid of hurting some one," Bramley declared. "I'm afraid of killing somebody. That's why I won't fight. You won't believe me, nobody ever does. But it's the truth. Just now—a moment ago—I couldn't pull the trigger of that gun. I couldn't do it because I could see in my mind what that bullet would do to you. I could see the havoc it would make. And I simply could not bring myself to cause that destruction. The thought of it sickens me and pulls me back, no matter how great the provocation may be. This afternoon there, out in the street, you thought I was afraid for myself. I wasn't. I wasn't afraid of being hit, not afraid of being killed; I simply couldn't bear the thought of what my own fists would do to you. You don't believe that, do you? Of course not. It doesn't hurt you to strike a man, does it?"

"Hurt me to strike a man?" Heenan repeated, puzzled.

"Yes!" Bramley said. "I know you don't understand what I mean. Perhaps I can make you. You'd be shamed to strike a frail, sick woman in the face, wouldn't you? Can you think of anything that would force you to do such a thing as that?"

"What's that got to do with a fair, square fight between grown-up men of a size?" Heenan countered angrily.

"Everything!" Bramley answered. "As you would feel about hitting a frail little woman, I feel about hitting any one, bruising or wounding any living thing, from the tiniest animal on up. I can't help it—I was born that way. I'd pay any price to be able to stand up this minute and take a full, free smash at you, and be glad to see the blood run from it; but I can't. I'm not afraid of being hurt nor killed, but I can't make myself fight. I'm not a coward, and yet the girl I'm engaged to—the girl that cared enough for me to make this long trip up here alone to —to marry me—she's called everything off, because she—she thinks I am."

"An' you've got about as much chance left with her as one o' these Chinese lap dogs would have with a hungry wolf pack," Heenan said, nodding. "She called me some kind of a drunken beast. Zowie! How her eyes did snap when she looked at me! I'll bet she chucked you hard and forever, huh? Nobody short of a real man is goin' to win that girl an' hold her. No

sirree! I reckon you're some shy on what a real man should be, Bramley."

"You still think I'm a coward?" Bramley asked. "That I'm afraid for myself?"

"Oh, put it any way you like," Heenan said, "it figures up just the same to that girl that came all the way up here to marry you, an' then didn't. You say yourself that you won't and can't fight, no matter what happens That's enough to queer you with her. Makes no difference whether you're a coward or not—which same I reckon you are. The point is this: When a spunky, high-headed woman like that gives herself over to a man, she reckons on bein' took some care of. She aims to make a present of herself to some guy that can keep what she gives him. A woman like that wants to take up with some man that can keep other jaspers off the premises when they ain't wanted, an' take some good care o' her an' her kids, till they're old enough to take care o' themselves."

"But, man!" Bramley protested, "you know—you must know that I'd fight at the drop of the hat to protect her from danger."

"Would you?" Heenan questioned him. "I dunno. You wouldn't fight me this afternoon to keep from losin' her. If you wouldn't fight to get her, you can't expect her to believe that you'd fight to keep something or somebody from takin' her away from you if you did have her. You can have the use o' the shack here to groan an' moan in for a spell, if it pleases you. Me, I got business elsewhere."

Ethel Kempton entered the ladies' parlor of the Cleaver Hotel and watched Heenan with cold disgust, as he rose and awkwardly bowed.

"You asked to see me?" she said frigidly.

"I just come from havin' a powwow with George Bramley," Heenan said bluntly.

"And he sent you to speak to me?" the girl asked, with a ring of scorn in her voice.

"He did not," Heenan denied. "I reckon I'd be the last man he'd pick out to do any speakin' for him. I've got no more use for that coward than you."

An indignant flush glowed in the girl's cheeks.

"He's not a coward!" she said hotly. "It's just that he—it's just that—— It's just——"

Her voice died spiritlessly away, and her eyes went dull with a hopeless sorrow. She nodded her head wearily.

"You're right!" she agreed. "He is. He's a—a coward."

"He sure is!" Heenan agreed genially. "Leastwise that's all I can make of him an' his actions. Mighty good thing you went an' found out what he was before you went an' tied up to him, wasn't it?"

The girl nodded wearily, groped her way to a chair, and sat down.

"Seems like in a way I'd kind o' done you a favor by showin' him up like I done," Heenan rambled on. "Funny you should be so fooled in him, wasn't it?"

The girl strove to answer, but broke suddenly into a hysterical storm of tears. Heenan crossed the room and laid his huge hand tenderly on her heaving shoulders.

"Think a heap of him, don't you?" he said huskily. "Want me to go get him an' send him here to you?"

The girl jumped to her feet and drew herself erect.

"No!" she said firmly, fighting to keep back the convulsion of sobs. "That's all over. I'm starting back tomorrow. Mr. Heenan, what possible good can come of this talk? Why did you come here to-night to see me?"

Heenan squinted at the ceiling and thoughtfully scratched his chin.

"You've—come a long ways to get married," he said slowly. "If it hadn't been for me buttin' in the way I done, you would have. 'Count o' what happened, you figure now on goin' back where you come from, full o' sad thoughts an' suchlike. I figure on seein' to it that you get married same as you intended to."

"Mr. Heenan!" the girl exclaimed sharply. "I'll—I'll never marry him!"

"I reckon not," Heenan agreed with her. "Mebbe you'll marry me."

The girl started back.

"Mr. Heenan!" she exclaimed indignantly.

Heenan took up his hat and moved to the door.

"I don't know yet," he said seriously, "I think mebbe you will. If you do, you won't regret it."

They traveled the rough, narrow trail perilously along the steep, wooded flank of the mountain. Tom Beasley, the weather-beaten old guide, rode in front, leading the single pack horse that accompanied the party. George Bramley brought up the rear, and between them, silent, oppressed by the forebodings of danger, traveled Ethel Kempton, on her sad way back to the nearest coast town, where she could get a boat for below.

The girl was afraid. She was afraid of Heenan. His words, "Mebbe you'll marry me," sounded ominously in her ears. She had tried to assure herself that they were but the empty words of a bragging bully, but she could not. She was possessed of a panic she could not banish, while yet she remained in the Territory of Alaska. In the shadow of these grim mountains, in the primeval vastness of that wilderness, all impossible things seemed possible. Because she was afraid, she had yielded to Bramley's humble entreaties to be permitted to escort her to the coast.

Poor Bramley! His final crown of thorns was the realization that his presence afforded the woman he had loved and lost absolutely no sense of protection or safety. The narrow trail ran through a dense thicket of alder and birch. As they entered the dense grove, the girl urged her horse forward that she might be near Beasley. It was bitterly evident to Bramley that her trust was all in the guide, and not in him.

Suddenly Beasley reined in his mount and swore. The girl screamed, and Bramley, leaning forward on his horse to learn the cause, looked fair into the muzzle of a gun, held steadily in big Bill Heenan's left hand. With a second gun in his right hand, the big Alaskan held Beasley helpless.

"You people are goin' to lose one o' your party," Heenan said sharply. "The lady's goin' with me."

Even then it was to Beasley the startled girl looked for help.

"Oh, Mr. Beasley, do something! Help! Please help!"

It was Bramley who answered her appeal by action. He slid from his horse, searching for his gun as he dropped.

Heenan's revolver roared, and, as Bramley spun halfway round, a red stain sprang out on the gray of his left sleeve near to the shoulder. Then Bramley's automatic spoke in answer to Heenan's fire. Heenan shot again, and again Bramley's automatic spat its reply.

Heenan staggered backward, pressed an arm across his chest, and, turning, ran, stooped and stumblingly, into the green cover of the thicket. Bramley emptied his automatic after the fleeing Alaskan.

"You got him!" Beasley sang out, as Heenan disappeared among the foliage.

"I think so," Bramley agreed calmly. "You ride on with Beasley, Ethel; I'll stay here and keep watch until you're safely away."

The girl slid from her horse.

"You are hurt!" she gasped. "You are hurt!"

Bramley glanced down at his left arm.

"Flesh wound," he said indifferently. "Ride on with Beasley, Ethel. Hurry!"

The girl shook her head and the tears rushed to her eyes.

"Not without you," she said brokenly, and stumbled forward into the circle of his arms. "Oh, George! My man, my brave, brave man!"

Bramley bent swiftly and kissed her; then lifted her back into the saddle.

"Go!" he said sternly. "Go, I say!"

He slapped the girl's horse smartly, and it plunged away after Beasley's

mount, which was already disappearing around the bend in the trail.

For several minutes Bramley stood alone, peering sharply down into the thicket where Heenan had disappeared. Then he lifted his hands above his head and raised his face to the sky.

"Oh, thank God!" he said softly. "Thank God!"

He swung into the saddle and rode on, erect and calm, after the woman he had loved and lost and won.

He had scarcely passed from sight, when there was a movement among the bowlders above the trail on the opposite side from that where Heenan had been, and little Tin Can Harris drew himself up from his hiding place and gazed about.

"Oh, Bill!" he called softly. "Say, Bill! You there? You all right?"

A moment, and Heenan scrambled up from the alder thicket on to the trail. He stood panting and mopping the perspiration from his face. Tin Can descended to him.

"Gawd! You had me scared," he said shakily. "When I see you stagger an' duck away there, back through the bushes, I says to myself, I says, says I, 'I bet that fool Beasley done forgot to fill that Bramley guy's gun with blank cartridges, same's he said he would.' I never did think much o' that Beasley person nohow. After this Bramley boy opened up on you, an' I see you stagger an' go duckin' away down through the bushes there, I says to myself, says I, 'I bet he's done gone left a bullet or two in, anyhow.' I was scared you'd been sure 'nough hit, the way you acted."

Heenan shook his head.

"No, Beasley done his part all right. Good thing he did! Young Bramley put up a reg'lar fight, didn't he? I scratched his left arm just to see if he'd stand bleedin'. He kep' comin' for more."

"He's got me puzzled," Tin Can said. "Backed down from a fist fight, an' then, by ginger, he goes an' just as good as commits suicide, drawin' his gun against you when you got him covered cold. I don't make him a-tall. He's some kind of a coward, but he's a brand I ain't familiar with."

"He's no coward," Heenan said firmly, "not him. It's with him just like he said it was. Fightin' jes' nacherally don't set well on his stomach. It turns him sick. You take a Siwash, now, Tin Can, he'll gobble up a potful o' spoiled fish an' swear he's had a fine dinner. Just because I can't swallow the same dish, that ain't sayin' that I got no appetite, is it? That don't mean that I got dyspepsia. No. It just means that I don't like that kind o' food. An' Bramley, he don't like fightin'."

"Well, if a man that won't fight when he's slapped an' called out of his name ain't a coward, what is?" Tin Can demanded querulously.

"A coward," Heenan replied thoughtfully, after a moment, "he's a man that'd rather see his woman look away from him an' go on livin', than die tryin' to take care o' her."

"Mebbe so," Tin Can admitted grudgingly. "She sure seemed to be able to stand the sight o' him, after he bristled up an' made that gun play against you, didn't she?"

"She did," Heenan agreed shortly.

"But say, Bill, what would you 'a' done if Bramley hadn't come to the front an' chased yuh off like he done?"

Heenan drew a deep breath, and an expression of loneliness—loneliness and a keen, pathetic soul hunger saddened his face. He shrugged his shoulders and hitched up the belt of his trousers.

"Aw, thunder!" he said. "Come on, le's go."

A remarkable short story called "A Man of Destiny," by John Fleming Wilson, will appear in the February 20th POPULAR. It's a yarn of a skipper who believed in himself despite an appalling series of set-backs

The Forgotten Land

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Sunny Mateel," "The Amazing Tenderfoot," Etc.

We can't recall that we have ever published a story like this in the POPULAR. It is a staggering thing—the kind of yarn you'll talk about to your friends; the kind of yarn that is sure to bring us a number of letters. You know the type of story Knibbs writes—Western, with a good deal of sympathy for man and his four-footed companion. There is the Westerner here, but he is placed in a setting so far removed from anything that Knibbs has ever given us that it took our breath away. Knibbs is a poet as well as a novelist; and as we read, we had a vision of "the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling." It is prophetic, but we have known prophets who guessed wrong, and we fancy Knibbs is wrong—at any rate, we hope so.

THE little power station far up in the Gray Grouse hills had received a warning telephone message from the lower station that the alien horde had at last reached the edge of the divide. Even as Jack Hanley, lone watcher of the Gray Grouse station, strode to the doorway he could hear the distant stutter of machine guns. Evidently the lower station was making a last, futile stand.

Hanley's station, hidden in a half cavern, had escaped the eyes of the great war birds that swept their shadows across the barren hills of the divide. Once more he tried to reach the lower station, and rang repeatedly. Finally a guttural voice answered. Hanley could not understand the import of the answer, but he flung back a taunt and hung up the receiver.

West of the mountain power station the ends of the railroad siding ran to a natural stop of banked rock and earth. Beyond the stop was a sheer drop of four thousand feet. Hanley wondered what the four box cars would look like when they reached the bottom of that four-thousand-foot drop. The cars were laden with provisions and supplies for the upland line. They had been there several weeks. The linemen of Gray Grouse had never returned from their trip to the lower country. Hanley had wondered and waited.

He took a bar and a shovel, and began to dig in the ground beneath the stop. If he could blast out enough earth, the cars could be worked to the edge of the abyss with a pinch bar, and then——

He placed the dynamite and ran out some twenty feet of fuse. Then he crept back of the stone-walled station. With the detonation rose a geyser of rock and dirt. The cars trembled as though from some inner impulse, rumbled toward the edge of the cliff, and plunged over.

"They don't get that lot of stuff," he told the silence. Then he entered the station to reappear clad in overalls and a short canvas jacket which bulged at the pockets. He had stuffed all the ammunition and matches he could find in the jacket and saddle pockets. He had turned to go to the corral back of the station when he noticed the faded flag, limp on its weathered halyards. He ran it down and folded it. This,

with some odds and ends of clothing, he packed in the saddle pockets. Then he saddled and led his old red roan horse, Candy, to the cliff trail. He had made that trail himself, working at it in his spare hours. It was hazardous at best, but Candy was used to it. As Hanley worked down the narrow footway he whistled. The tune was "Dixie."

"Down there," he told the horse, "is where America makes her last stand—some day. Far as I know, Candy, we're America just now. Come on!"

Halfway down, he dismounted. He led the horse round a bend and came back afoot to a banked slide above the trail. Here he placed several sticks of dynamite, ran a fuse round the bend, and stood stroking the horse's neck. A sudden reverberation startled the horse and drowned the melody of "Dixie." Hanley mounted and rode on down. The trail behind him was now impassable.

Next morning he found the wrecked box cars—fragments of splintered wood and lengths of twisted steel, round which were scattered broken boxes and battered cans of provisions. From one huge packing case protruded a corded bale of Mackinaws. He selected one and tied it to the back of his saddle. Then he roped a stiff pack of provisions, and, munching crackers, trudged out across the sandy valley. He headed north.

That night he found water and camped. Toward morning he was awakened by the snorting of his horse, which ran in close. Hanley thought he saw a blur or something moving. He whipped out his automatic and fired once, having his scant supply of ammunition in mind.

His horse quieted, and after a while strayed out to graze again. In the morning Hanley found the carcass of a small brown bear near the camp. Hanley's blind shot had cut the bear's spine back of its ears. "And the doc said no meat for mine," he soliloquized as he clumsily skinned the animal. "Well, that was some time ago. I'm going to eat meat. I want it; I need it. Huh! Might as well pass over full of bear meat as full of sardines and crackers, eh, Candy?"

Candy nickered. "You're a good partner," laughed Hanley. "We just got to be good friends, Candy. You see, we're about the only Americans left. East, west, south, they've cleaned us out. North—well, perhaps we can work through. We'll try it."

Hanley's six years of sickness, coupled with three years of almost solitary life at the Gray Grouse station, had about worn out self-pity; so his habit was to look for the next best thing to do in any circumstance. Having been so close to the Unfathomable Abyss so many years, the solitudes of the Forgotten Land brought him no fear, but rather peace. He enjoyed his present liberty of meandering. As for his countrymen—and the conquerors—"Some day I'll come back," he told himself, with the imperishable optimism of his race.

That noon he ate meat. And again at night he ate meat. A week later he began to notice his shirt collar was becoming tight; that he had to lace his mountain boots easier. He no longer felt the tug of the heavy automatic at his belt. He was growing stronger. Always on the lookout for game, he finally killed a deer as it came to a lush-rimmed pool to drink. His old indifference toward life vanished. He became heartily interested in living. And he continued to eat meat.

One day he took out the flag and spread it on the sand as he rested at noon. Hitherto the stars and the stripes had meant—well, a gala day, a holiday, a mourning, something political, a regiment of militia. As he gazed at the vivid colors suddenly the flag became a thing dearer to him than his own life. He could not analyze this transformation. His indifference to things national had become a burning patriotism, a hunger for the sight of that flag, a heartache for all that it had meant—and for what it meant now.

He gathered the bright folds up reverently, and tucked the flag away.

That afternoon he did not whistle as usual as he trudged beside the horse. nor for many days did he speak save to Candy when that good animal greeted him with a nicker at dawn each day. On and on toward the north they journeyed. So gradual had been the change of environment that Hanley did not feel the first edges of winter as they ran down out of the north to battle with the glow of a low sun. He wondered just how far he would journey without meeting with that yellow tide which had submerged his countrymen. The land was desolate. Hanley avoided ranches and buildings. There seemed to be no life of any kind. Even stray dogs were met with infrequently, and horses and cattle were never seen. The land had been devastated; but what had become of the conquerors? Hanley's instinct guided him to the north. At that time he had not surmised the appalling fate of the invaders.

Working through a fairly wild stretch of country, he continued to kill game; to eat meat.

One day, as he rode along the edge of a cañon, his hat blew off. He watched it sail and settle on the rocks far below. He tied a bandanna about his head, waved his arm in farewell to the south—to civilization as he had known it. The timbered lands, the blue hills, the raw peaks of the range loomed ahead, offering shelter, game, firewood—— Candy's pack had become so light that Hanley was now able to ride. The horse had kept well into the cinchas, grazing upon the bunch grass of the bottoms. His coat was becoming thick and heavy.

One morning Hanley wakened to find a thin sheath of snow on his blanket. He sat up and gazed at the toe of his boot, which had been stubbed out on the rocks and gravel. He wriggled his toe and grinned. As yet he had not felt the cold.

A month—and he knew that he had crossed the Canadian line. The hills now loomed big; wooded ranges of deep blue shot with sharp splashes of green. Candy began to grow gaunt on the scant grazing. Hanley counted his cartridges. He would have to learn to trap game.

Once while working up a sparsely wooded valley he heard the unmistakable whir of a war bird. He reined his horse to a clump of spruce. Scarcely was he concealed when something crashed to the ground near him. He dropped from the horse and lay flat. The ground shook. He rose to see a ragged hole blasted in the spot where he had been, near the spruce. The war bird swept on, apparently satisfied that the bomb had annihilated the lone horseman. After that Hanley was careful to choose the shelter of the trees as he rode. But no air craft came again to terrify him. And still he journeyed north.

With the coming of the first snow he cast about for a place to winter. His first work was to gather feed for the horse, and it kept him several weary days locating sufficient open land covered with frozen grasses to make it worth while to build a permanent camp.

While exploring the rugged depths of the hillside forest he came upon a cave screened by evergreens and snug against the winter winds.

Day after day he gathered moss and the frozen grasses, stacking this haphazard provender in a makeshift corral at the back of the cave. Candy was allowed his freedom, and he wandered about, picking up what he could, but he had been so long with Hanley that even when hungry the horse would not stray far. Meanwhile, Hanley blocked up the entrance to the cave to conserve the heat of his night fire. His clothing was torn and worn to strings. He still had an extra Mackinaw and overalls, but these he decided to save for extreme weather. He utilized his reata as a huge snare, and, springing down a heavy sapling on a deer run, was heartened to find a half-grown buck in the noose next morning. It was sheer luck, and never happened again. But the hide, which he tanned awkwardly, he cut into leggings.

He learned to snare rabbits. From strips of deer entrails he made snares

and set them on all the runs. He plaited horsehair and snared grouse. He still had about a dozen rounds of ammunition.

Without warning he came upon the grizzly. He was packing some snared rabbits to his cave when he heard the horse nicker shrilly. Hanley dropped the rabbits and entered the cave. When he realized what he had started he regretted, in a flash, his haste, but he stayed with his instant decision, and emptied the automatic at short range in the bulk that came toward him. The grizzly flinched once or twice, but came on. Hanley backed from the cave. In the open he saw that the bear was hit hard. He raised the gun to fire a final shot. It was empty. He threw it at the bear's head as a huge, winnowing paw rose and descended. Hanley felt the soft warmth of fur descend, and then darkness.

The frost biting at his fingers roused him. He had lain beneath the grizzly for perhaps an hour. Slowly he dragged himself from beneath the beast and sat up. Down his face ran a wide, burning welt. He rose and staggered to the cave. That night he built a fire and lay beside it, his head and face roughly bandaged. He was feverish—sick. But even in his pain he consoled himself with the thought that the grizzly's hide would make a much-needed blanket.

For several days he did little but drink water and drowse beside a small fire. Finally he was able to skin the bear, which meant days of stiff work. He rubbed the hide with grease and wood ashes. Just how he would soften it for use was a problem.

His wound caused him some fear. He was afraid of frost getting into it. Loss of blood had weakened him. He again became indifferent to life until one day he came upon the folded flag. He spread it upon his knees and gazed at it. Then he whistled "Dixie." Candy, munching his scant provision, nickered. Hanley rose and strode to the horse, leaning against him. Candy nosed his master's sleeve. Hanley felt that in some way he had not played fair. Candy, good animal, showed so plainly his affection, his loneliness—and Hanley had been selfishly mute.

The spring mists were drifting through the dank woodlands when Hanley essayed to explore the range above his cavern. First he led the gaunt and tottering Candy to a patch of new grass. Then he cleaned and greased the automatic, which he had not used since killing the grizzly. His shirt was in tatters. His face, scarred from temple to chin, was shaven, for he had a peculiar aversion to a beard, although none to long hair, and his hair now hung to his shoulders. As he climbed the ridge he looked constantly toward the south. There seemed to be no sign of human life. Game was plentiful; there were no hunters.

As he rested in a patch of sunlight near the top of the range he made a picture which fitted into its background perfectly. The faded blue of his flannel shirt, the brown of his khaki overalls, the long dark hair, bronzed cheek, and clear, hard eyes; he was half wild, slowly reverting to the cave man in habit and thought.

Higher on the ridge, he was able to get a clear view of the manifold hills and valleys of the north. Would he find anything over the range?

An answer came in the moccasin tracks that he found limned clearly on the unmelted snows of the northern hillside. He followed the blue glimmer of a mountain lake with his eyes till he defined a thin weft of smoke rising near its border. This lay below, and the moccasin tracks led toward it. With the caution of the wild, he stalked the trail of the moccasins, on down the slope until, on rocky ground below, the trail was lost. Through the low spruce he saw a cabin. Once he would have shouted and ran toward it. Now he felt for the automatic, and crept silently from tree to tree—wondering—watchful——

Between the hut and the forest was a strip of open land. Hanley kept to the edge of the forest.

Presently from the hut came a girl attired in a nondescript costume of

deerskin and cloth. Hanley was about to advance and speak to her when a huge Indian stepped from the hut. The Indian spoke to the girl, who turned from gazing across the lake, and answered. Again the Indian spoke in the heavy gutturals of his kind. Evidently he had sent her out to gather fuel, for she stooped and gathered bits of driftwood. The Indian watched her, but she made no haste. Presently he strode to her and struck her with his open hand. She cowered on her knees. The Indian gestured, commanding her to pick up the wood. With the rise of the Indian's arm in that gesture Hanley's arm went up, and the automatic bit the silence with a stuttering report. The Indian wilted where he stood. Screaming, the girl rose and ran into the cabin.

Hanley waited a minute. Nothing broke the silence. Evidently the girl and the Indian had been alone.

As he stood over the dead Indian he saw that he had wasted several shots. Any one of the heavy slugs would have ended him. This was his only regret —the useless expenditure of ammunition. As for the dead man—— "Not a bad shot," murmured Hanley. Then he crept toward the hut, his automatic trained on the doorway.

The girl backed against the farther wall, her eyes wide and her face pallid. Hanley lowered his gun arm. "It's all right. I'm an American; I'm white."

For a long minute she was dumb. Then she came toward him, her eyes filled with a peculiar light. "You killed him?"

"Easy. He was beating you."

"The beast!" she flashed.

"Any more of his kind around, for I'm short on cartridges."

"No. We were alone here."

"Well, ma'am, I come from the United States. This is Canada, I take it. My name was Jack Hanley once. Don't need a name now. Don't know how you came to be living with that buck there, but you didn't live with him because you wanted to. I can see that. Anyhow, the next thing is to get you out of this."

"I thought at first you were an Indian or a breed. I'm from the North —Hudson's Bay Post, on the Fish River."

"Huh! No, I'm no breed." And Hanley pulled back a shred of his tattered shirt, which showed his chest white.

She nodded. "I think I am going crazy."

"Don't! I thought so this winter. I argued myself out of it. I hit the trail north when the yellow men came. Been living on the other side of this range all winter. Funny your buck didn't happen over."

"He wouldn't go south of this range. You know the yellow men died of the plague. The Indians north heard of it. Mooswa there, he dared to come this far south because he had lied to my father, the factor."

"Any factors left up north, miss?"

"No. Father and my brothers stayed even after the company dissolved. We knew of the conquest south, and that Canada was again a wilderness. We had nowhere to go—and we were not unhappy up there. Then one day the Indians and breeds turned against us. Mooswa told father he'd save me. Father trusted him. I wish I had stayed—and gone with my own kind."

"Yes, miss. I'm right sorry. The bottom's kind of dropped out of the world, I guess. But you're living, and I'm living. Now as a man I feel just like taking you along for company—to my cave. But as the only living representative of the U. S., miss, I leave it up to you. You are free to come or go—or stay here—only I reckon I'll kind of hang around and kill game and see nobody bothers you. That is, if you say so."

The girl studied him for a moment. "The scar?" she queried, indicating the white welt from chin to temple that gleamed on Hanley's face.

"That? Oh, I mixed with a grizzly last winter. I'm sleeping on his hide now, though."

She all but smiled. Hanley noticed

that while he talked she was busily packing the lighter things in the cabin. The dead buck, Mooswa, might have been a stranded log for all the attention she paid to him. Hanley watched her, admiring the color of her clear-skinned cheek and the deft, quick hands as she laced and corded a pack. "Got any kids around anywhere?" he asked.

"No!" she flashed. "And thank God for that!"

"Here, too. There's some things left to thank God for, and you're one of them."

She dropped the bundle she held, and ran to him with hands outstretched. "You are a good man!" she half asserted, half questioned.

"I hope so, miss. See here; don't go with me just because there's nothing else to do. Don't do what I say because I say it. You can come as my wife or my partner. I'll leave it all to you."

"My father was a Scotchman," she said half timidly. "He would never be striking a woman in his life."

"Then your old man and I have the same idea, miss. Time might come when I'd quit a woman, but I'd never hit a woman. I couldn't hate a female that much."

"I'll go with you," she said, and there were tears in her eyes.

Hanley took the pack of odds and ends. The Indian's rifle and ammunition, matches, snowshoes, all these things he packed to the cave over the range. Not many weeks after that she told him that the scar had decided her, admitting that she feared him at first —almost hated him for the cool, easy way in which he had killed Mooswa, the buck. Hanley was too generous to ask her what she would have done had he left her there alone. And as yet no word of love had been uttered. They were companions, chums, sharing the toil and the loneliness of the silent woodlands.

Until midsummer they camped in the cavern in the mountains. Candy grazed contentedly and grew fat on the grasses edging the streams. The girl taught Hanley many things about tanning pelts, shaping snowshoe bows, trapping game, and fashioning garments of buckskin.

He never asked her about her family, waiting until she chose to speak of them. Instead he told her of the land to the south and of his station on Gray Grouse until the very name tugged at his heart. One evening, by the fire, he proposed to her that they journey south and "see what had become of the world," as he put it.

Finally she assented to the idea. They fashioned a pair of packsacks of untanned deer hides, roped their scant belongings on Candy, and took the southern trail. Hanley had some ammunition for the rifle and a few matches.

The summer weather was clear and mellow. Night after night they slept beneath the stars to arise and face the day's journey south with keen anticipation. They passed abandoned ranches and villages. Hanley would explore none of them, but skirted them all until after a month of journeying they arrived at the border of the Forgotten Land. No sign of the dread war birds had shadowed their journey. They followed the stream leading down the Gray Grouse valley until they came to his first camp. Next morning he led her to where the wrecked box cars lay. "There's cloth, grub, nails, wire, tools, everything. Some day we can set up housekeeping right. Of course, when you're ready, Bess."

The girl busied herself examining the boxes and bales in the wrecked cars. Hanley asked her to stay there while he went up to the power station above. The trail was gone, but he managed to climb up afoot. From his old station door he could see the lower station with his field glasses. Suddenly he decided to go on down to the lower station. He could hardly stand the strain of waiting longer to see what had become of his erstwhile friends of the line. He ran most of the way down the rusted tracks. He found the lower station abandoned, ransacked, desolate. Piled human bones told a story. Yet the place looked as though the invaders had departed hastily. There were many

things of value left. Hanley sat down and pondered. He was drawn from his bitter daydream by the neighing of a pony. Out on the open he saw several horses. Evidently they had drifted in from the Forgotten Land, as he had seen no horses or cattle in all his journeying.

The third day after their arrival at Gray Grouse, Hanley had patched the trail so that Candy could make the ascent. The girl was amazed with all that she saw—the southland, the peculiar foliage, shrubs, and cacti. The soft, clear air was a delight to her. Hanley noticed that she seemed more womanly, softer of voice, more pensive. When he proposed roping some extra horses and journeying east, she agreed to the proposal without argument.

Of that journey they never spoke. Hanley had traveled east as far as his home town—a great city of the lakes—and there they had camped on the silent outskirts of the city until the mute and awful buildings, the great empty boulevards, the musty charnels of a solitude more appalling than the desert, drove them westward again. Hanley had been to see the graves of his family, and he thanked Providence that they had all passed away before the yellow tide came. Traces of the plague that had ravaged the conquerors were seen here and there; some street blocked with silent, shriveled figures piled grotesquely, some hall or basement literally filled with the bones of the stricken.

Back in his home city, he had climbed the tallest flag mast and nailed the Stars and Stripes there, watching it even as they journeyed westward again until night shut it away from them.

At Gray Grouse they camped and planned. The Forgotten Lands were rich in pasturage and water. Supplies were at the lower station, and Hanley spoke of firing up the freight locomotive and running several cars of stuff up the grade. "And we'll just dump 'em over," he said, smiling.

"We'll be packing them down on the ponies," she corrected thriftily.

"Oh, very well, Bess. Over the edge is the quickest."

Hanley gazed at her, and his smile faded. He saw that he not alone owed happiness to her presence, but that he owed the girl herself the best that was in him. She had been a stanch and cheerful companion. She was lovable in many ways, and the very fact that they were isolated, that he dreaded losing the great boon of her friendship should he speak of love, checked him. But——

"It's a big thing—to face the rest of life alone, Bess. We got to do it. And we got to have a home and some comforts. We could go up north again and live like Indians. But I don't like that idea. We're white folks, and we kind of owe it to what was America to stay white. It's mighty easy to drift back to being savages. Now here's the idea: There's horses—and some cattle on the lowlands yonder. There's a heap of good grazing in this valley, and there's water. It's a grand country; you said so yourself. It's a good place to live—and will be a good place to die. We might as well make up our minds to that, and maybe it'll help us get along better. Some one may come along some day. If they do, they'll be right welcome. If they don't—why, I got you, girl."

She came to him, and flung her plump brown arms about his neck. "You're just a boy yet," and she kissed him. "And you have not asked me."

"Great gosh, Bess! I didn't know you ever knew I hadn't asked you. I thought you were contented just as you are."

"I would be calling you husband," she said, smiling.

And that afternoon the flag fluttered on the Gray Grouse power station again. Hanley, gazing up at it, whistled "Dixie."

Some fifty years later a band of Northern Indians came upon a weather-beaten ranch house in the valley of the Forgotten Land. They wore buckskin leggings and breechclouts, but their bronze bodies from waist to shoulder were naked to the sun. They carried

heavy bows and arrows tipped with obsidian. One who seemed to be their leader fitted an arrow and advanced toward the ranch-house doorway. He peered in, then turned, and beckoned to his fellows. They came from the surrounding chaparral, stalked to the house, and filed in. This was to them another of the useless habitations of the vanished white man. They would search it, and then——

Some moth-eaten garments hung on pegs in an inner room. They found rude, strong furniture, a table, and a rusted stove. The place, despite the smother of sand and dust, appeared to have been neatly kept. The leader, entering another room, started back. In a huge armchair sat a shriveled figure. The head drooped forward as though pondering. The desert air had dried and stiffened the form until it seemed that of an old man sleeping upright. Across the knees of the figure lay a faded banner, its end partly clasped in one skeleton hand. The Indians, muttering, backed through the doorway. Then one of them, an old man, reentered the house and drew the flag from the knees of the silent one. As he stooped he noticed a six-shooter on the floor beside the chair. He picked it up and examined it, shaking his head. As a young man he had known of such things. He examined the figure closely, found a brown splotch on the flannel shirt, and nodded.

Then the old Indian came out into the sunlight, and, spreading the flag on the ground, he traced with his finger the stars and dim stripes of a lost glory. The circle of faces around him glistened. He rose and swept one arm wide in a noble gesture. Then he gathered a handful of sand suddenly and flung it aloft.

The glistening faces nodded. One Indian grunted a question. The old man pointed to a mound near the house —a grave, grass-covered, in the shade of the northern wall. Then he raised his hands as though to part his hair—the sign talk for "woman." The brown faces gleamed. So the white man had not waited to follow his woman to the hunting grounds.

Once more the old Indian's two arms were raised. He separated his hands and swept them round in a wide, an inclusive circle comprehending his tribe. Then he pointed to his breast. The red man had come into his own again.

A RESTRICTED PRIVILEGE

A COLORED parson was in trouble. His offense had been called to the attention of the board of deacons of his church. He was summoned before the deacons to hear the charge against him.

"Pahson," announced one of the deacons, in a solemn voice, "you stan's accused ob bein' too familiar wid some ob de women membuhs ob de cong'egation. In fac', pahson, it is charged dat you has been seen wid your arms aroun' one ob our sistuh membuhs."

The parson stood reflecting for a moment. An expression of reverence was upon his face.

"Brothuh Jones," he said at last, with great dignity, "I think you will fin' dat de Good Book says dat de shepherd mus' take de lambs ob his flock to his breas'."

The deacons ushered the parson into another room, and continued their momentous deliberations. After considerable delay they called him in again to hear their verdict.

"Pahson," said Brother Jones, "de boa'd ob deacons has carefully considered your case, de charges, an' likewise your statement ob defense. Pahson, de boa'd ob deacons rules dat hereafter you, as de shepherd ob dis flock, kin restrict your activities to de ram lambs ob de cong'egation."

A Chat With You

THIS is the first issue of the new twenty-cent POPULAR. It is bigger value for twenty cents than the old magazine was at fifteen. The increase in the cost of paper, the increase in the size of the magazine have added more to the manufacturing cost than we have added to the price. It costs more to send THE POPULAR to press than any other all-fiction magazine in the world. It is by far the best value. The new POPULAR is going to be a success. It is going ahead, faster than ever, in a bigger way. This present number, which we are sure you have read by this time, is by no means the last word in excellence. There are better numbers to come. For well over a decade we have kept all the promises we have ever made. That policy remains unchanged.

ROY NORTON, Victor Maxwell, H. H. Knibbs, J. Frank Davis, Rowland Thomas, B. M. Bower, Roman Doubleday, Herman Whitaker, H. C. Rowland, and John Fleming Wilson are all contributors to the next issue of the magazine. Norton's novel is fully as long as the average dollar-and-a-half book. We have no hesitation in saying that it is better than the average dollar-and-a-half book, for any bookseller or buyer will tell you that the appearance of a novel by Norton is an event. If you had never heard of Norton before, but had read his "Phantom U-Boat," which appeared recently in this magazine, you would know without our saying it that he is a wonderful story-teller. "The Benevolent Liar," which appears complete in the next issue of the magazine, is another sort of story, but just as good. It has the Norton narrative interest, the Norton personality. It is a story of California of the mining days, of vivid characterization, of sharp dramatic quality.

WHEN people talk about the qualities that make an author great or the reverse they are always in more or less danger of talking nonsense. We hear of the "message" an author has to give the world, the "philosophy" that he has to expound. As a matter of fact, philosophy has little place in fiction. Let a writer, however gifted, become too philosophical in his stories, and he will have need of all his philosophy to console him for a mournful lack of appreciation on the part of the public. His real mission and purpose in life should be to show men and women and events as they appear to him, "to paint the thing as he sees it, for the God of things as they are."

NOBODY sees things just as they are. The absolute, cold, interstellar cosmic truth about anything is too much for mortals. We see "through a glass, darkly." In none of us is the glass purely transparent. With some it is marred, and distorts the vision; with others it is green with envy or murky with hate. Some personalities view things through a mellow, amber light, some shed the rosy hue of early morn-

ing, and some the warm radiance of a sunset. The personality of the author is his "message." He must show us things as they seem to him. It is the light he casts upon them that makes them cheaply gaudy, softly beautiful, or sordidly ugly. Norton has a clear vision for the gallant, stirring, emotional, and dramatic sides of life. In "The Benevolent Liar," he will introduce you to people you wish you might know in actual life, and will show you that the storied land of the argonauts is more interesting and attractive than you have ever imagined it for yourself.

STYLE is another topic hard to discuss without fatuity. So many writers have rendered themselves practically unintelligible in a mistaken effort at style that we are tempted at times to think that the style is nothing and the story everything. This is a mistake. If we look back we see that no story has ever lived long in public estimation, has ever received a favorable verdict from the only final judge, posterity, without distinction of manner as well as of matter. We remember the stories we ran by Jack London, not for the plots, not even for the characters, but for the way they were written. Style is as much a part of the man as his characters are. The failure to achieve good style is often due to an effort to imitate the style of some one else. We can read Carlyle, but when Meredith tries to imitate him, as he acknowledged he did in the first chapter of "The Egoist," he becomes incoherent. Knibbs has his own style. So has Witwer, for humor depends much upon style. But were Knibbs to try to write like Witwer, the result would be sad, not funny. The conception of Witwer trying to write like Knibbs simply staggers the imagination.

JUST because we have insisted first of all on real stories and real incident in POPULAR fiction does not mean that we are not just as eager to get the genuine—not the make-believe and dull—literary quality. We doubt if any one writing to-day can tell a story of adventure in smoother, more attractive fashion than Rowland. When you finish "The Avenger of the Blood," in the next issue, you will regret not only the end of your association with a number of interesting characters, but the fact that a rippling, delightful narrative that charmed as well as thrilled and interested has come to an end. Any story of Bertrand Sinclair's will repay study if you are interested at all in the way modern American English should be written. Sinclair spent a long time learning to say just what he meant, but he can do it now. Holman Day's story in this issue would be nothing like as good were it not for Day's way of saying a thing, the instinct for the inevitably whimsical and humorous word which is as much a part of him as his hands or feet. Hundreds of good stories have been forgotten because the authors had no style. It isn't the story alone or the people in it; it is the way of telling. And the way of telling is all there is to style. If you are interested in speaking or writing good English, remember that it is a live language, and that there are new ways of saying things in it. You will find a lot of these new ways in THE POPULAR.

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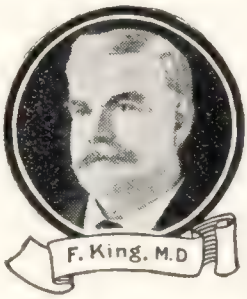
It is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually in this country alone are taking Nuxated Iron. Such astonishing results have been reported from its use both by doctors and laymen, that a number of physicians in various parts of the country have been asked to explain why they prescribe it so extensively, and why it apparently produces so much better results than were obtained from the old forms of inorganic iron.

Extracts from some of the letters received are given below:



Dr. King, a New York physician and author, says: "There can be no vigorous iron men without iron."

Pallor means anaemia.

Anaemia means iron deficiency. The skin of anaemic men and women is pale. The flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone, the brain fags and the memory fails and they often become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks. In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, candies, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated cornmeal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste-pipe the water in which our vegetables are cooked is responsible for another grave iron loss.

Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe old age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt.

Dr. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied both in this country and in great European Medical Institutions says: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If people would only throw away patent medicines and nauseous concoctions and take Nuxated Iron, I am convinced that the lives of thousands of persons might be saved, who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, consumption, kidney, liver and heart troubles, etc. The real and true cause which started their diseases was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood."

Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of 20 and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—nuxated iron had filled him with renewed life. At 30 he was in bad health; at 46 he was careworn and nearly all in—now at 50, after taking nuxated iron a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth.

Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly-looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron.

If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirly rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time, simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron, simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prize-fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, visiting surgeon, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York City, said: "I have never before given out any medical information or advice for publication, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the case of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty not to mention it. I have taken it myself and given it to my patients with most surprising and satisfactory results. And those who wish quickly to increase their strength, power and endurance will find it a most remarkable and wonderfully effective remedy."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents is widely prescribed by eminent physicians everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy, in nearly all forms of indigestion, as well as for nervous run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron and increase their strength 200 per cent. or over in four weeks' time provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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In long, charming letters to his mother and family, written with boyish frankness and enthusiasm RICHARD HARDING DAVIS recounts his adventures from his entrance into the newspaper field in 1889. These letters, covering his most active and interesting years, have been gathered together and will be published serially in the Metropolitan, beginning in the March issue (on the newsstands February 8th). The writer's brother, Charles Belmont Davis, will add introductory paragraphs to the letters and provide a sequential form for their publication.

The Adventures and Letters of RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

begin in a notably bright and interesting number of America's Livest Magazine

For instance—

We have with us again that delightfully real victim of calf love—no other than the well-known William Sylvester Baxter. His literary father, BOOTH TARKINGTON, relates another amusing escapade of W. S. B., who might have been you at the tender age of seventeen!

LEROY SCOTT, the first writer who has succeeded in putting the drama of New York's dress-suit underworld on paper, contributes a new detective Clifford story that will thrill the most hardened disciple of Sherlock Holmes.

There are two love stories of Metropolitan quality by DANA GATLIN and Sinclair Lewis; also the first of a big love and mystery novel of the Great Lakes by EDWIN BALMER and WILLIAM MAC HARG,—"The Indian Drum."

WILLIAM HARD who is in England for the Metropolitan gives us a vivid behind-the-scenes picture of Britain at War. THEODORE ROOSEVELT, who writes exclusively for Metropolitan has a commanding contribution on Canada's part in the Great War and the lesson it should bring home to Americans.

There are eight big pages of ROTARY GRAVURE pictures, and a striking six-color cover design by HASKELL COFFIN, not forgetting the regular departments—ART YOUNG in Washington and CLARENCE DAY chatting in his own way on books, people and things.

This unusual magazine will be on sale at all good newsstands February 8th. If you are located where you cannot conveniently get to a newsstand mail fifty cents in stamps or cash to address below and the Metropolitan for three months, beginning with the March issue, will be mailed you post paid.

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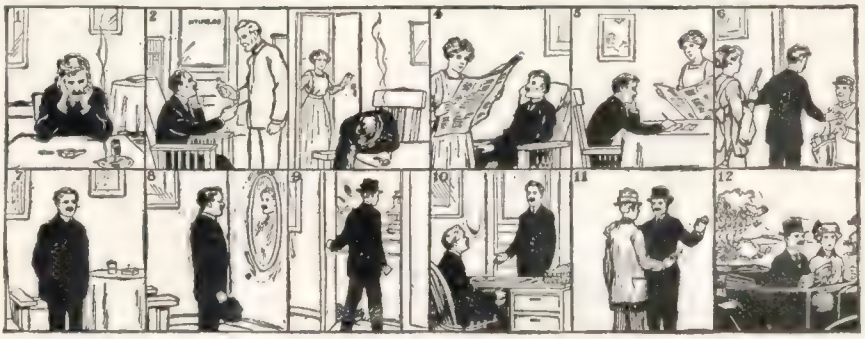
If name of Course you want is not in this list, write it below.

TOBACCO HABIT



Easily Conquered in 3 Days

Picture No. 1—*Shows how tobacco has nearly wrecked a man's career. He has become nervous, dyspeptic and irritable; he cannot sleep well, has lost his energy and ambition.* **No. 2**—*The doctor says: "I'm giving you this medicine but it will do you very little good, unless you stop killing yourself with tobacco."* **No. 3**—*Still a slave; another collapse.* **No. 4**—*Wife reads advertisement of Mr. Woods.* **No. 5**—*He writes for Mr. Woods' free book.* **No. 6**—*Being convinced by multitude of proofs, he has ordered remedy which is in box postman is now delivering.* **No. 7**—*Has begun to overcome tobacco craving. Already is feeling much better; vigor and ambition returning.* **No. 8**—*Surprising improvement; all craving gone, filled with new courage and backed by good health.* **No. 9**—*Beginning anew.* **No. 10**—*Succeeding in business.* **No. 11**—*No trouble to resist temptation of tobacco in any form.* **No. 12**—*By clear-headedness, good health and energy, he has now become prosperous.*

Would You Like to Quit Tobacco Quickly and Easily and Enjoy Yourself a Thousand Times Better While in Robust Health?

STOP RUINING YOUR LIFE

Why continue to commit slow suicide when **you can live a really contented life,** if you only **get your body and nerves right?** It is unsafe and torturing to attempt to rid yourself of tobacco by suddenly stopping with "will-power"—don't do it. The correct way is to **eliminate nicotine poison from the system,** and genuinely **overcome the craving.**

Tobacco is poisonous and seriously injures health in several ways, causing such disorders as nervous dyspepsia, **sleeplessness,** gas belching, **gnawing,** or other uncomfortable sensation in stomach; **constipation, headache,** weak eyes, **loss of vigor,** red spots on skin, **throat irritation,** catarrh, asthma, bronchitis, **heart failure, melancholy,** lung trouble, **impure** (poisoned) **blood,** heartburn, torpid liver, **loss of appetite,** bad teeth, **foul breath,** lassitude, **lack of ambition,** weakening and falling out of hair and many other disorders.

Overcome that peculiar nervousness and craving for cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco, or snuff.

Here is an opportunity to receive **FREE** a **carefully compiled treatise on the subject,** containing interesting and valuable information that you should be glad to learn about. This book tells all about the **renowned THREE DAYS' METHOD** by which **thousands and thousands saved themselves from the life-wrecking tobacco habit.** Full particulars, including the book on tobacco and snuff habit, will be mailed **FREE TO YOU,** in plain wrapper, postpaid. All you need do is **merely REQUEST IT.** A postcard will do. Address

FREE

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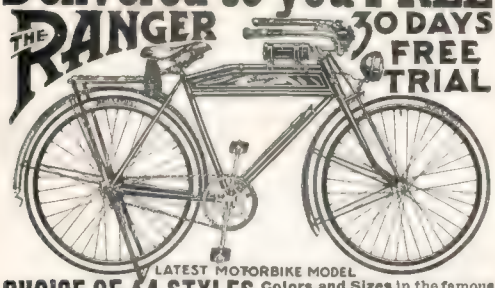
NOTE.—To those who are injuring their health, making themselves nervous, dyspeptic, etc., by excessive use of cigarettes, cigars, pipe, snuff or chewing tobacco:—here is your opportunity to quickly and easily become your own master.

Delivered to you FREE

THE RANGER

30 DAYS FREE TRIAL



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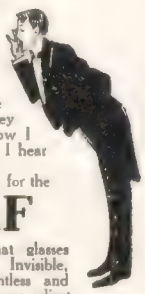

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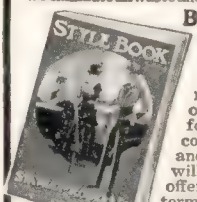

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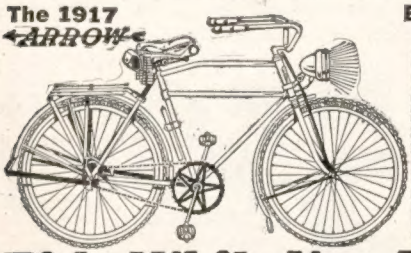

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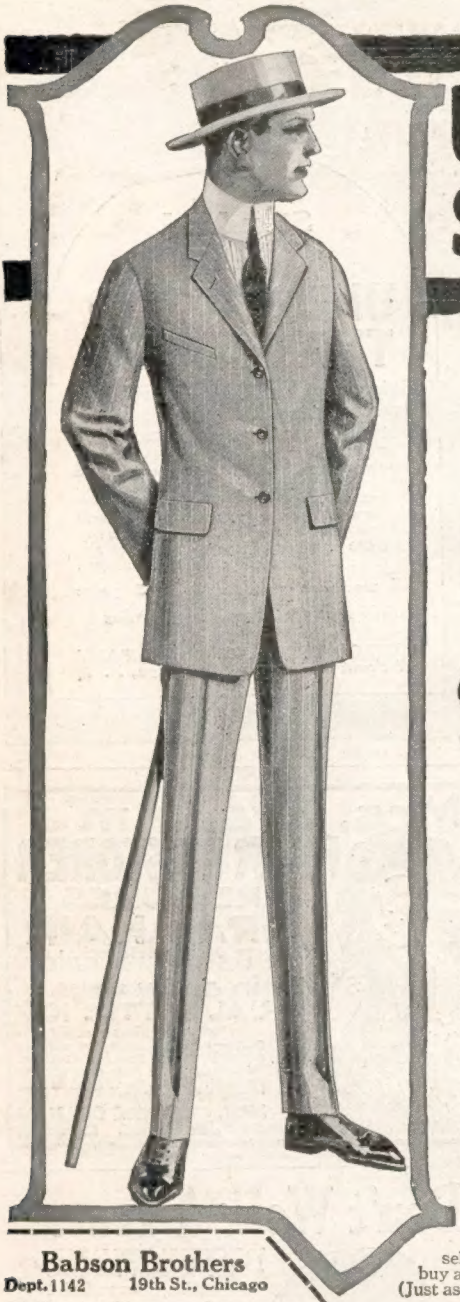

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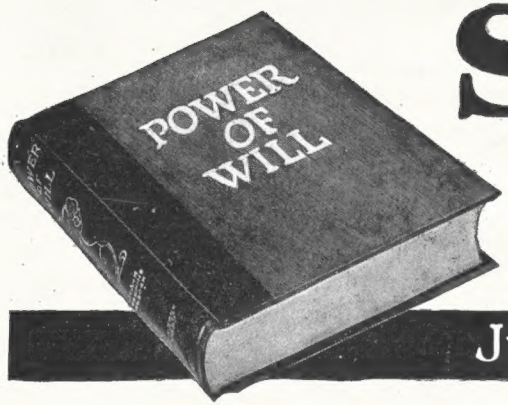

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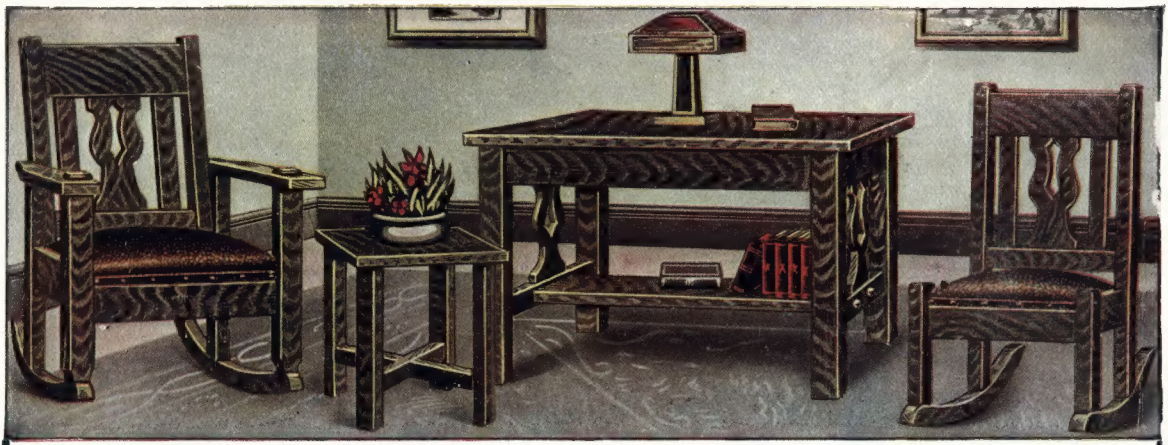

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☐ Rocker, Black Delavan Imit. Leather $7.95 ☐ 44-Piece Aluminum Set, $9.95

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Upholstered in black Delavan imitation leather. **Order by No. B-2627-A. Send 45 cents with order, 75 cents month'** Total price..... **$7.95**

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